

SCARLET WOMEN 9

Newsletter of the Socialist Feminist Current of the Womens Liberation Movement. January 1979

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(40p)

Editorial Statement

"Socialist Feminism is a distinct revolutionary approach, a challenge to the class structure and to patriarchy. By the patriarchy we mean a system in which all women are oppressed,

an oppression which is total, affecting all aspects of our lives. Just as class oppression which is total, affecting all aspects of our lives. Just as class oppression preceded capitalism, so does oppression. We do not acknowledge that men are oppressed as a sex, although working men, gay men and black men are oppressed as workers, gay and blacks, an oppression shared by gay, black and working men. Sisterhood is our defence against oppression, and as such is part of our revolutionary consciousness.

Socialists sometimes see the struggle as being about a change in the economic structure alone. For us the struggle is about a change in total social relations. We are concerned to develop an understanding of the real relationship between male supremacy and class society. As Socialist feminists we have to examine socialist feminist thought and seek to develop it. What we are looking for is nothing less than a total redefinition of socialist thought and practice. We are working towards a socialism which seeks to abolish patriarchy.

What this means for Scarlet Women

We want to publish papers, letters articles, ideas that develop the thought and effectiveness of socialist feminism. The debate about the class struggle and relating to left groups can take place in our pages only if contributions are based on the belief in an autonomous, Women's Liberation Movement and also on the belief that autonomous movements have the right to define their own oppression and the struggle against it."

Editorial Meeting

The next editorial meeting will be in North Shields on April 29th and 29th. Where are you, representatives from East Anglia, Midlands, South West and Wales, Yorkshire - WE STILL NEED YOU!

Women Demand

- The right to control their own bodies
- The right to contraception
- The right to free abortion
- The right to refuse forced sterilisation

We Appeal

- For an international show of solidarity in support of a woman's right to choose
- For a massive mobilisation of women, students and youth, working people and the Labour Movement, political and human rights organisations, and immigrant organisations to support our call for an International Day of Action on a woman's right to abortion, contraception and against all forced sterilisation.

International Day of Action - March 31st 1979

International Campaign for Abortion Rights

Editorial

SCARLET WOMEN 9 is unfortunately about two months late. We're sorry, but although there was a lot of enthusiasm about the topic - The Roots of Fascism - sisters seemed to find it very difficult to write either about fascism itself or about anti-fascist activity they had been

involved in. One of the problems in discussing the latter is that many people feel ambivalent about working in mixed anti-fascist/racist campaigns. It is always much easier to write strongly for or against something, than to express doubts. Doubts are too often seen as a sign of weakness by the left when you are trying to write about political activity.

The word fascist is often used sloppily by socialists and radicals to describe aggressive, bullying attitudes. We are not using it in this sense. Fascism is not just a military dictatorship, nor is it simply an authoritarian government or corporate statism. Fascism is all these things - but it is also more than these. A military government can come about by a coup; corporate statism can develop with increasing repression. However a fascist dictatorship establishes itself with the help of a mass movement, which is composed of a middle class fearful of their security when both the organised working class and big business appear to threaten all they hold dear. Ironically the fascist movement also attracts working class people, demoralised after their own organisations have been defeated and destroyed.

A fascist movement mobilises around reactionary attitudes already in the consciousness of sections of the population, attitudes stemming from the racism and sexism endemic in a patriarchal and imperialist nation.

Socialists can understand the connection between fascism and racism - although sometimes comrades tend to equate them. We can all see how the extreme right builds on racism, which assumes that other peoples are sub-human, to pose solutions to the masses in times of crisis - for the 'subhuman' are always expendable. But the significance of sexism to fascism seems to have escaped most sections of the left - but not the Right!

We cannot see fascism as a system of extreme class rule in which the working class is controlled by the state in the interests of profit. It is also an extreme form of patriarchal domination in which women's role is reduced in that of child-bearer only. In order to get women's acquiescence in this, fascist ideology glorifies motherhood. Thus fascism had a specific appeal to women as well as posing a specific threat. Therefore it is important for women to fight against fascism as women and to make anti-fascist movements realise that the fight for women's liberation is an integral part of the struggle against fascism. We hope that SW9 will, in helping to clarify our understanding of fascism, help us to develop the confidence to make claims on the basis of our own interests which will in turn contribute to a more effective total strategy against fascism.

We would like to refer sisters to the article by M. Macciocchi on 'Female Sexuality in Fascist Ideology' in the first issue of Feminist Review available from [address]

Future Issues

The following possible topics for future issues of Scarlet Woman have been suggested: Education, Socialist Feminist organisation and the WLM, sexuality, Nuclear power/technology, health.

We'd like to have your comments and any other ideas.

The Roots of Fascism

When we were discussing our ideas for this article, one of the things we found hardest to disentangle was : what distinguishes fascism from capitalism ? Or from patriarchy ? Are women, and lesbians in particular, oppressed by fascist ideas and movement in ways that they are not under capitalism ? We certainly felt that racism and fascism, and the oppression that goes with them, are inherent in capitalism. So what makes fascism different or worse ? We haven't got a complete answer to this of course; maybe because we haven't got a complete theory of what capitalism, or fascism, or patriarchy are. Many aspects of fascism seem to be features of capitalism, taken to extremes. But we certainly feel that fascism is particularly dangerous for women, and for lesbians. In a capitalist society, women and gays can have a limited freedom, provided their way of life fits, among other things, the demands of the economy, e.g. consumerism (liberated' clothes for the 'liberated' girl-about-town; gay clubs and bars doing a roaring trade). Under fascism, our oppression would be total. The rest of this article looks at how, and why.

The emotional appeal of fascism seems to us to be built on a paradox of security and insecurity. Fascist ideas and movements flourish at times of insecurity - unemployment, inflation, poor housing conditions, changing morality. Fascism seems to offer a refuge, the security of 'leaders' and 'led', of firm ideas about discipline and order, while at the same time deliberately whipping up feelings of insecurity to increase its appeal. Fears of a 'flood' of immigrants taking jobs and houses, fears of crime and violence on the streets, fears of war and foreign invasion, are deliberately played on by fascist groups. And to allay these fears, fascists offer a return to the mythical past when families were families, and kids, women and blacks knew their place. Fascism also offers the 'security' of a closed mind. Fascist movements don't ask people to think for themselves or difficult political or moral choices. The leaders will do the thinking and choosing; the rest are to trust and follow.

The gap between leader and led in fascist parties is large. Orders come from the top and are to be obeyed. But the white, male followers are also offered their niche, their delusion of power. They are to rule over those lower in the pecking order : women, children, blacks, Jews, deviants. Each man is to be a little patriarch in his own family, with women and children under his thumb. The blacks (or Jews, or queers) who are depicted as taking his job, his housing, his women his place in the sun, are to be kicked out or destroyed. To the displaced, the jobless, those socially defined as failures or inadequates, fascism has a special appeal. It offers a kind of self-respect, and a 'reasonable' outlet for the negative emotions of fear and hate. Your failure is not your fault; it's the fault of the chosen scapegoat.

Fascist ideas and parties do, of course, appeal to some women and some gays. To understand this, and to place it in the context of the real implications of fascisms for women and gays, we must look at fascist attitudes to sexuality, the family and the role of women. Essentially, it seems to us, fascism is anti-sex. Sex is potentially anarchic, free and threatens the work ethic. Sex for the fun of it can lead to individualistic attitudes, and so is a potential threat to obedience. The sexuality prescribed for men by fascism is machismo, aggressive, egoistic. Pleasure is oriented to the male orgasm, and ignores pleasure for the woman. Sensuous, exploring, creative sexuality is ruled out. As for women, we are to have no

autonomous sexuality. Our role is to be an object for men. Heterosexual passivity is our model. Can this even be recognised as sexuality? - perhaps rather a 'healthy' lack of it. The usual doublethink operates - as well as being 'pure' and above sexual desire (what we might call the virgin-Rhinemaiden image), women are also essentially fleshy and unclean. Men, as the higher form of humanity, have to fight off this dangerous undertow and keep themselves clean-cut and manly. This kind of spiritual virility has obvious links with the male homosexual ideal of Ancient Greece where men were men and enjoyed an emotional - physical camaraderie while women were firmly enslaved as imprisoned wives/mothers or as prostitutes. Fascist ideas about men's and women's roles, and the sexual connotations of this help explain the attraction of fascism for some gay men - although officially fascist movement have always attacked homosexuality and gays. Women's other key role in fascist ideology, besides being objects and servants for men, is as breeders and mothers. A woman's place is in the home and family: in Nazi Germany Kinde, Kirche, Kuche. In England, the National Front promises to scrap the abortion law. A woman's right to choose would have no meaning. The State would control women's sexuality, our bodies, our reproductive powers. And through this, of course, our time, our work, our lives. Women are to be in a static role, as wives, mothers, and breeders of the next generation. While men, of course, will be glued to the other side of the coin, as husbands, fathers and workers.

'Spearhead', the N.F. magazine, promises 'the renewal of the secure family unit'. And in this lies its appeal to some women. The family is obviously not working : divorce rates are rising, kids are rude and delinquent, relatives don't stick together like they used to. This 'breakdown of the family' threatens women in particular, as custodians and servants of the family. Fascism attributes the breakdown to the decline of authority in the home, school and state; and promises to restore the good old days when kids did what they were told, families stuck together and there were no cheeky West Indian lads at the bus stop. An N.F election leaflet put out in Brixton at the Council Elections in May (the candidate was a woman) appealed explicitly to the fears of the middle-aged and elderly white women about mugging. Many women are frightened and upset by the changes in morality and lifestyles. Fascism offers an easy answer : that the old ways were best, and unhappiness comes from the breakdown of institutions and the 'British way of life'. The analysis offered by feminists : that the family (in its recent form at least) never has 'worked' for women, and that in the unhappiness of the present chaos may lie the seeds of a freer future, is perhaps a harder one to accept.

And what of lesbians under fascism? Is there a specific way in which lesbians, rather than rebellious women generally, grate upon the fascist ideology ? And is there a specific way in which lesbians, compared with all feminists, indeed all women, are oppressed under fascism? On the whole, we think the answer to both these questions is yes, to some extent. Of course, lesbians are oppressed in all societies in which women are oppressed. But fascism, with its extremely fixed ideas about a woman's place, its super-patriarchal attitudes to the family and sexuality, is both particularly threatened by lesbianism, and particularly oppressive to lesbians. To a fascist, a lesbian is a woman right out of her place : not in a conventional family; possibly less tied to children ; worst of all, independent sexually, emotionally, economically, from men. Lesbians (and gay men) can threaten the rigid divisions of 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviour, 'male' and 'female' roles. (This does not mean of course, that all lesbians are right-on anti-fascists, any more than all women are

feminists, or all workers socialists). While lesbians can be, and have been a target for fascist (and patriarchal) fear and anger, as 'extreme' examples of non-dependent, women-orientated, assertive feminist women, we are also easily identifiable target for another reason. Like gay men, we are a 'deviant' group, raising the spectre of decadence, destruction, of the family, seduction of innocents. We can be identified as 'other' (just as blacks are 'other' because of their colour) and therefore as not quite human. And people who are not quite human are easier to hate, to fear, to line up for a sticky end. All feminists have everything to lose from fascism. For lesbians, the loss would be even quicker and more brutal.

Lesbian Left, London

Women and Anti-fascist activity

1/ Manchester

Note from Terry: This Article is only a very partial view - that in particular it doesn't mention the local WARF group cos I haven't really been involved in that and therefore didn't feel able to talk about it. I tried to get in touch with sisters and failed.

Over the last eighteen months or so the question of anti-fascism and its relevance for feminists has been the subject for much discussion. From the development of womens contingents at Grunwicks to the large and solid presence at Lewisham significant numbers of women chose to demonstrate their presence within mixed mobilisations and to begin to challenge many of the traditionally male ways of organising such events. These notes are an attempt to bring out what I feel some of the most important points brought out by this process and highlight what I see as some of the outstanding problems.

- I. Within the Manchester Women & Socialism group quite a lot of discussion was concentrated around a national demo in Hyde. The occasion of Martin Webster's one man march through the town in defence of his right to speak brought a national focus to the North West which meant our group felt to some extent 'responsible'. We called a series of open women's meetings to discuss how feminists should respond to the situation. During a preparation period of roughly 6 weeks discussion and activity took place at a variety of levels. Many women came to meetings and participated in the discussions. The issues raised went well beyond the tactics of one day to broader, more long term approaches to the problem.

It's virtually impossible, particularly after so much time, to do the discussion justice. Firstly as usual in these situations things were made more difficult by our lack of knowledge of what the main body of The Front were intending to do. That then raised questions as to how important was physically preventing the fascists from marching and how important demonstrating a political opposition. Certain things were agreed on that are often forgotten in these situations for example that it was crucial to involve and reach as many local people as possible. This was particularly important because Hyde is an area where the fascists are reasonably strong and also because the press had done their utmost to paint the anti-fascists as violent extremists. Fortunately in this occasion we had the support of the

local anti fascist committee. Regular leafleting took place in and around Hyde for 6 weeks before the demonstration and we produced a specific leaflet to hand out to women

- II. This seems to be important - then and later. Women talking to women. Perhaps less intimidating not just hand someone a leaflet but talk to them women in shops. It's warmer. Politics is not men's territory; it's just they say it is.
- III. We talked about our leaflet. Presentation is important. Don't want a political tract. We decided also not to talk about Germany. Not sure how many people do look back on it and for what reasons. Seems there is quite enough to say about what the N.F actually say and do.
- IV. Putting things concisely is such a problem. Looking back I can see things that I don't like in the leaflet - 'Only one in 3 immigrants was born in The New Commonwealth' = black. Census 1971. Seems in many ways that we were answering racists with their own terms. How do you talk about imperialism concisely? There must be ways. We/I need so much to develop these skills.
- V. There was the day itself. The level of organisation was pretty impressive. As far as the local committee possibly could it tried to get people to break up into groups of five who knew each other. The police were extremely intimidating. This way people were less likely to get hurt, lost, confused. Support systems. Things should always be like that when there's any possibility of confrontation - with the police, the fascists, SPUC - anyone. It makes us so much stronger. It's complicated. To find ways of doing it - particularly when many turn up spontaneously. But it's so important.
- VI. Why women together? For me there might be some men I trust. On balance I prefer being with women. More readiness to admit fear (didn't way feel it). Less reliance on brute strength can mean more thought about when and where to push forward. And it was so important to me at Grunwicks when I was lost and on my own to find other sisters. Never seen them before, Didn't matter. They were prepared to include me, I didn't need credentials. But anyway it's important for women to have the choice where to be, who with.
- VII. For me though womens contingent means more than that It means saying to men that politics doesn't just belong to them. O.K. so I think there are some men who accept that, who are fighting to change things. But many many men don't. Or perhaps they'll agree to let us in the side door and make the tea! These feelings are true in so many political areas but somehow it's clearer in anti-fascism. The need for a common fight is so clear. But not on their terms. So for me the need to challenge male assumptions is made so burning. Divide and rule is the tactic of the fascists. For me the feeling is that women have to help bring the opposition together - but without compromising our needs, our demands.
- VIII. Back to the day itself and something quite thought provoking happened. Grunwicks had been the first time I'd been with women on a demo and that was quite different. Then we'd been in fairly direct confrontation with the police.

On this occasion what amazed me was the venom that some sisters showed towards Webster himself and later towards the idea of the front in general. This attitude was shown by sisters who had previously taken a series of different political positions on our discussion meeting. It seems that this attitude is one which is often labelled 'male' by feminists. But in practice this seems neither adequate or accurate. What seems that this attitude is one which is often labelled 'male' by feminists. But in practice this seems neither adequate or accurate.

What seems to happen is that the need to make the most defiant feeling stand against facism is expressed through this anger. I'm not saying that irrationality in itself is bad, but in this sort of situation I find it frightening because it becomes so totally overpowering. The tendency for example to shout personal insults at facist leaders on one level can just be a question of letting off steam but can also serve to obscure questioning of what facisim actually is. Similarly while I personally accept that it's necessary to physically prevent the fascists marching, it's easy if we become emotionally obsessed with this to ignore other levels of fighting facism.

IX. So far I have talked almost exclusively about what happened around one event. This is because it was something I participated in and therefore feel reasonably confident to talk about. Since then my major energies have gone in other directions. This has been for circumstantial reasons and not because I feel the fight against facism is no longer relevant. Although many things have changed since that time e.g. the setting up of more WARF groups, the development of the ANL and so on, I feel that the sort of ideas I have raised here still have relevance today. If for example women wish to make an organised presence felt on the demonstration, this for many is also vital within ANLS and anti-facist committees. As far as can see although some women organisations have chosen to remain fairly separate from male or mixed groups the problems of working with men are in many ways more important to confront than on many other political issues which large numbers of feminists have been involved in. For many of us the problems of confronting sexism in the structure and conduct of mixed meetings is something we face all the time. But I feel as if the movement as a whole is perhaps more able to learn from this experience than from others. Nor is it by any means a question if merely making feminists feel comfortable. As a socialist feminist I do believe that it is vital to win the working class to support feminism. Episodes like the ARAFAC Conference make me aware that we cannot assume any depth of understanding from the anti-facist movement. But they also make me aware that unity of all those threatened by facism is vital if we are going to win.

Terry Conway

2/ Bradford - Have you heard the one about Bradford ANL?

Towards the end of the concert at the Multi Racial Carnival, held in Bradford on Saturday October 15th, a singer appeared on the stage and started to tell a joke about rape. Four women got onto the stage to protest about the joke. The singer agreed to apologise. But while a woman was explaining the intervention to the audience, the P.A. system was switched off, and several men got onto the stage and attacked the women. There was a general melee and the police moved in to clear the stage.

The local A.N.L. organiser then got a loud hailer which he refused to hand over to the women so they could explain their position. He then proceeded to apologise to the crowd for the 'disturbance' prompted by these 'ladies' (quote). Some women ran towards the stage at the point, and the police moved in and arrested twelve people. Eleven people were charged variously with obstruction and threatening behaviour.

The incident raises the following questions:

- Why are sexist singers invited to anti-facist events?

- Why didn't the organisers allow the women to speak?
- Why is the fight against sexism not seen to be part of the fight against fascism?

Sexism is as much a part of the fascist mentality as is racism. Had somebody made fun out of black people being beaten up or Jew-baiting, and black people and Kews had run onto the stage to protest, we think almost everyone attending the multi-racial concert would have supported them. When a man uses the rape of a woman as a source of humour, then we should expect the same show of solidarity in the fight against sexism, as we would see in the fight against racism. Both are endemic to fascists.

Eleven people appeared in court on the 30th November.

Of the eleven people charged, nine have been bound over to keep the peace for a year, and the other two are still fighting their case. Any donations welcome to [address].

Robbo

3/ Dundee - The "Anti-Racist" Strip Show

On Saturday 4th November Dundee University Students Associations (DUSA) held an Anti-Racism Conference. This was followed by a 'Rave-up against Racism' in the evening. The entertainment at the 'Rave-Up' included bands, discos, films and novelty acts. Originally John Peel (of Radio 1 fame) was going to be present but he cancelled at the last minute so DUSA hastily booked STRIPPERS (one male and one female) instead.

The fact that there would be strippers present was only announced on the night before the 'Rave-Up' so it was difficult to organise a protest. However the majority of people who were at the anti-racist conference were angry that sexist entertainment was being used to promote anti-racism. The conference had no power to order DUSA not to employ strippers, instead the conference called for a picket of the Students Association building from 8p.m. onwards. A leaflet was quickly duplicated and placards made. About 20 people turned up on the picket (approx half of them men).

The picket was quite successful in persuading those going in to the Rave-up to boycott the strippers (there was other entertainment on at the same time). Unfortunately about 9:30pm. The call of the pub became too great for the men (and some of the women) and 4 women were left to carry on the picket alone. The strippers were supposed to be going on about 10:30pm. And as the man was going on first we stayed till 10:45. We later heard that the male stripper had to give up his act halfway through because he had beer glasses thrown at him by the men in the audience. This destroyed the argument that 'strippers weren't sexist because there was a male stripper as well as a female one': obviously all they were interested in was the female stripper.

Feminists have recently protested about strip shows at a number of places in Scotland such as Edinburgh University Union (Spare Rib 70) and in the Shetlands (S.R. 74). We were not very successful in stopping the strippers appearing in Dundee but we did manage to make our views known (despite the very short notice) and working together on something like this gave us an amazing feeling of strength.

However the picket did highlight some of the problems associated with rapidly organised action especially when men are involved as well. For instance we did not sort it before hand whether we were going to try to persuade people to not go into the building at all (in which case the South African Scholarship Fund which was benefiting from the Rave-up and which pays for a black South African student to study at Dundee, would suffer) or whether we just wanted people to boycott the stripper. We did manage to agree beforehand on non-violence, but we didn't decide how long the picket would last or arrange a rota so we could all get a break. We also didn't agree collectively on the wording of the leaflet or posters: one of the men was holding a poster which said 'DUSA lives off immoral earnings'. He was persuaded to scrap this as we don't want to be classed with the Mary Whitehouse brigade - we disagree with strip shows because they are sexist not because they are 'immoral'.

On the whole most of us thought that the picket was worth doing and was reasonably successful but it's a pity our involvement in anti-racist events is marred by the sexist attitudes of some of the other people involved in these events.

Nina Woodcock

4/ Teesside - Women against the Nazis

I have no experience of WOMen AGAINst the Nazis outside of Teesside except that I was struck by the honesty of the W.A.N. speakers at the ANti-Nazi League national conference (i.e. the joy of four women turning up to a meeting after mass leafletting an estate). They described just how difficult it is to reach working class women. It's not as easy as putting a resolution against the N.F. at your local trade union branch.

In 1977 the N.F. started standing candidates in the Teesside area. An Anti-Fascist Committee was set up and three women members wrote and distributed leaflets specifically for women. The local A.F.C subsequently became A.N.L. and we set up a W.A.N group. At the height of the campaign last year between five and eight women were actively involved, several of them quite new to political campaigns. At first we held separate meetings; later A.N.L. meetings were structured, so that everyone attended the business meeting, and after an hour, broke up into sub-groups. This worked well while we were active, (this included leafleting regularly); we also had a very successful campaign against N.F graffiti.

The graffiti was particularly bad near the home of one member and she and another woman forced the council to remove it, but leading up to this, leafletted and talked to local women against the N.F. and our campaign. The response we got was friendly, and we even got some press coverage. However, the fact that we have remained the same tiny core of women. Since the campaign nationally has gone into a lull, no women, apart from occasionally myself, turns up to A.N.L meetings. This reflects not only the extra pressure on us all - e.g. work, kids, housework etc, but also just how boring and oppressive the meetings are.

To be positive because of Women Against the Nazis we haven't lost contact with each other, and although we are tiny, we have established ourselves, we are quite confident and ready to become active whenever the N.F. appears on Teesside.

Rock Against Racism

Any organisation that can mobilise 80,000 people against the National Front must be worth getting involved in, and that's precisely what the Anti-Nazi League Rock Against Racism achieved last year at the first London Carnival. Even so, I suspect that many feminists have been, and will continue to be, wary of becoming involved in their local A.N.L. This I can understand, given the presence of white, male, middle class so-called socialists and revolutionaries at most A.N.L. meetings, where they exhibit their characteristic patronising and oppressive behaviour.

This is a real problem, and there have been times when I have felt so exploited, angry and put down that I have sworn never to go to another meeting. However I think the point to make here is that A.N.L. is not restricted to just these sort of men, and has been successful despite their presence. R.A.R. in particular has had such an appeal because it isn't condescending, You don't have to be a middle-class Trotskyist to understand the political issues; this comes over loud and clear in the propaganda, and you have a feeling that "Temporary Hoarding" has been written by rockers as opposed to hacks in disguise. This non-condescension plus the use of imagination has meant that hundreds of young working class people have turned up to gigs and carnivals. That's why I stayed actively involved in A.N.L. but particularly in R.A.R. I have personally had the opportunity of getting to know other people - young people, gay men ; here the relationships are not oppressive. Consequently one becomes more optimistic.

I should point out that at the R.A.R. conference last year a substantial amount of serious discussion took place about the need to combat sexism in black and white music. This debate not only reflected the impact that the WLM had started to have on attitudes, but it gave people a chance to discuss, sort out, think about the basic sexism of fascism. If R.A.R. takes up issues like sexism in rock music. I think it's worth getting involved. Too many feminists rage about sexist bands, but only to each other.

Liz Clay

5/ Tyneside - Interrupting the Consensus

We as a group of socialist feminists, were asked at very short notice to speak at a meeting about racism and fascism held at Newcastle Polytechnic Students' Union. We said that in the circumstances we would produce a leaflet and speak to it from the floor.

The other speakers were the Community Relations Officer for Newcastle and the President of the NUS Trevor Philips, both of whom seemed to equate racism with fascism - probably because being black/Asian and male, their overwhelming experience of fascist attitudes was racism.

We challenged their assumptions, saying that fascist attitudes were very much more deeprooted than their anti-racist strategies seemed to allow for. It was not enough to organise meetings or to write leaflets 'educating' people about the lies of Enock Powell. Lack of information is not the basis of racism. We then argued that in order to develop and

adequate anti-fascist strategy we as a movement must understand how deeply entrenched racist and sexist attitudes are in our culture.

Trevor Phillips suggested that the anti-racist struggle was a big enough task in itself without also trying to take on a fight against sexism, that if we tried to link these issues we would only alienate people. He also said that because the left had not yet worked out a line on the family we should leave these problems to the side.

We pointed out that if the left hadn't 'a line on the family', the right certainly had. It understood very clearly the relationship between women's oppression, sexual repression and authoritarian attitudes - it understood very clearly the importance of women's work in the home and its relation to the capitalist economy and unless the left had a clear understanding of all this too then we as a movement would be bound to fail and where would that leave us when the fascists came to power??? It was not good enough for the left to ignore sexism - to fail to relate it, for instance, to the violent attacks on gay people, to the closing down of gay clubs. Any movement against fascism has to recognise the urgency and the relatedness of all these issues.

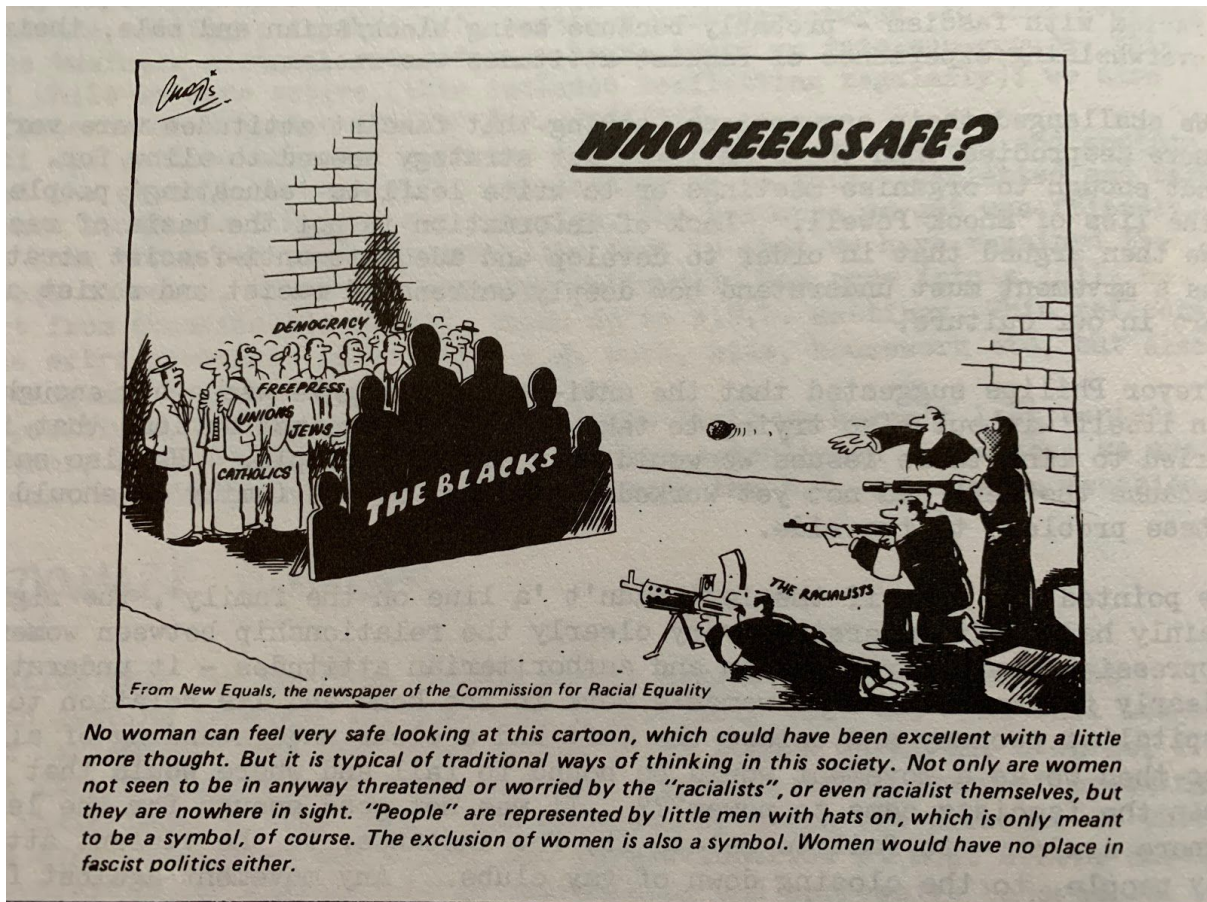
Trevor Phillips felt that there was no way that these connections could be made simply to people whose major concern was the anti-racist struggle - in reply to which we quoted Tom Robinson speaking at the first big ANL rally when he said "We are the scum of society - perverts, comies, darkies, women, and punk rockers." - a statement which was greeted with spontaneous applause. We said that his audience had identified themselves in his remarks and in doing so made for that moment an identification with each other.

We argued that therefore it was quite possible to spread the understanding that we are 'all in it together' and that all forms of oppression endemic in patriarchal class society have to be tackled by the left and the Anti-fascist/racist movement if we are to win.

We were aware that many people were extremely surprised by what we had to say but some, including, we felt, the C.R.O. had responded positively to some aspects of our argument. In fact, after the meeting, we had quite an interesting discussion with some people who said that they had been extremely disappointed at first in that it had seemed that they were in for another 'preaching to the converted' session but that our views had stimulated them to think in a new way about the struggle against fascism.

In the past we can remember agonising about how and whether to challenge sexism whenever we met it within the socialist movement. We found it difficult at times to defend ourselves against the charge of being 'diversionary'. At this meeting we had no such qualms - thinking about the roots of fascism made us concerned to see that the movement really thinks about and challenged its own sexism - and incorporates these challenges in all its activities. Our struggle for our own liberation is not in any way diversionary - and this together with our awareness of the urgency of the problem gave us the confidence to 'interrupt the consensus' as we did.

Anne Torode, Jean Charlton, Anna Briggs



Scarlet Women 10 will be about Violence against women. We would like articles discussing violence against women from a theoretical perspective; ways of organising against violence; the degradation and violation of women in the language, media, advertising etc. Articles: max 1500 words - reviews, reports, letters, ideas, cartoons etc by April 15th

The Tyneside Leaflet

1. It is perfectly clear that Fascist movements develop in periods of economic crisis and instability, when people feel threatened and insecure as individuals and where there seems to be no positive alternative based on workers' power.

Although fascism is a radical movement, it doesn't require a radical change in consciousness, but mobilises on the basis of existing attitudes, feelings, and insecurities.

"The National Front draws on existing nationalist, racist and patriarchal ideologies and practices which enable it to present itself as credible and respectable Under an economic crisis the masses are radicalised, their grievances channelled through a hyper-reactionary, racist, authoritarian and familial ideology The family, repression and authority were all relegated to a 'secondary' status by the left and yet, it is precisely from these that fascism draws it power....."*

2. In patriarchal class society, to be male means to be assertive, aggressive, dominant, virile, potent. Self doubts arising from these aspirations are alleviated by the breadwinner role and wearing the trousers at home. Unemployment, low wages, lack of status and individual powerlessness in society invite a desperate response. The fascist emphasis on

males and power offers an easy answer and an illusionary security. This idea of manhood excludes sensitivity, which is seen as a weakness, and this automatically devalues womanhood, a devaluation which is endemic in our society anyway. In men eroticism is perverted to an expression of power which in turn leads to the sexual repression of women and the total repression of homosexuality. Sexual repression gives rise to the development of a character 'armour' which fears openness and change, and which clings to the idea of 'law and order' and 'authority'.

3. Although Fascist ideology compounds the devaluation of womanhood, it glorifies motherhood - in the service of the state - which is an attraction for women whose reproductive function is generally ignored and undervalued - and although fascism latches onto the ideal of the family, in practice, in Nazi Germany and Italy, women were used directly as breeders for the state.

"Women brought children into the world, but you (Mussolini) inspired and conceived them.

Truly it is at the most hidden depths of the woman that one finds the stimulating aroma the male vigour of the fighter: we feel you are ready to hold out your hands to us, just as we are ready to give you our sons for the fatherland."

(from a speech by a woman to Mussolini, quoted by Macciochi*)

Fascism takes patriarchal class society to its logical conclusion in its repression of women and its repression of the class in the interests of the survival of the system.

*See article 'patriarchy and Patriotism' in RED RAG No. 13

6/ Hackney and Islington Socialist Feminist Anti-Racism Group

The group started out a year ago as a study group. We meet fortnightly as a sub - group of the Hackney - Islington - Socialist - Feminists. One of the reasons for having the sub-group was that a lot of us were unhappy about the macho - confrontationist, boot-boy politics of Lewisham and we wanted to work out less alienating ways of dealing with the Front. There was obviously a need to apply this to our local situation (Hackney is traditionally a fascist stronghold) and we wanted to develop our theoretical understanding as well.

To begin with we each took it in turn to do some research and report back on a programme of meetings. First we attempted to define fascism through some historical and economic perspectives, then we studied the histories of the National Front and right wing groups in Britain, reading and discussing David Edgar's pamphlet 'Racism, Fascism and the politics of the National Front', and his play 'Destiny'. We then tried to look at State racism (we read A. Sivanandan's 'Race, class and the State' which links racist immigration laws with the demands of the labour market) and at the development of immigration and nationality laws and the proposed changes. We have now started to look at the question of women and fascism, using as our starting point the paper from the Women and Fascism study group at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

At the same time some of us have been involved in the Hackney Committee against Racialism (H.C.A.R.) meetings and activities. We have written a women's leaflet for HCAR, which will be distributed around Hackney and which we wanted to have to use on demonstrations, etc. We have taken part in local activities: marches, leaflet distribution

before the local elections; paper selling in the markets and 'Brick Lane'. This is raised all the problems with working with ale-dominated left-groups:- the bureaucratic structure, aggressive style and very little questioning of the 'traditional left' tactics for fighting racism. For instance at Brick Lane over the last few months we have felt that little effort has been made (or sustained) to inform the local community if why we're there, let alone involved them. We still feel unclear about the commitment to stopping the Front on the streets and what this involves in terms of violent confrontation, plus the fact that it often means just reacting defensively against the Front's initiatives. There is also the problem that now the police always turn out in such numbers to defend the Front we just end up being controlled by them, and this questions the whole validity of these tactics.

We haven't been particularly involved with the A.N.L. because of the way they have failed to integrate with existing local campaigns, and their unwillingness to take on the whole issue of State racism. At the end of a year's existence we still have a long way to go in working out a socialist feminist approach to racism and the National Front! We want to get more confident about instigating our own local activities, and we feel that feminists must force anti-fascist groups to recognise the key importance of women both to fascism and the fight against it. Our role in anti-racist work is more difficult, but one area we can work on is bringing in the different ways of organising that we've developed in the Women's Movement.

BOOKS WE'VE READ

A.Sivanandan Race, class and the State. 30p

D. Edgar - Racism, fascism and the politics of the N.F. 30p

Women and fascism study group - Women and the politics of the National Front. 20p & p&p from; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham.

If any women want a copy of the HCAR women's leaflet please write to - [address]

7/ Lambeth Socialist Unity and the Socialist Feminist Current

The article was written by five women who participated in the Socialist Unity election campaign in the Lambeth Central By-Election of April 1978. We wrote it because we wanted to:-

- a) Assess our role as socialist feminists
- b) Evaluate the experience of working with revolutionary political organisations in a parliamentary campaign and to try and draw out some of the implications of this practice for discussion within the Women's Movement.

WHY THE ELECTION WAS IMPORTANT

Our decision to participate in the campaign came from our estimation of the political significance of the by-election. This was because of the character of the constituency - the area includes Brixton with a high proportion of black people most West Indians, high unemployment, poor housing and cuts in education and social spending. We knew the election would be given wide publicity by the media. The unequivocally racist policies of both the Labour and Tory parties were made clear in the Select Committee's Report on Race and

Immigration, published in March 1978, and which demanded much tighter controls on immigration into the country and on black people already here. The announcement of the by-election coincided with the media taking up Ms Thatcher's statements on immigration, as the respectable face of racism.

Lambeth Central has long been a safe Labour seat and the death of Marcus Lipton occasioned the first by-election for many years during which time Labour has neglected the central issues in the area and participated in its decline. The campaign provided an opportunity to bring up these issues in relation to national and international politics. The results of the Ilford by-election indicated a growth in support for the National Front and their decision to put up a candidate in Lambeth Central showed they wanted to consolidate their gains and seek further publicity. It was thought necessary to counter this. Elections are particularly important at the moment in view of the Labour government's anti-working class policies and its Lib-Lab pact. So, there are a number of people disillusioned with Labour who may be receptive to a revolutionary socialist alternative and as socialist feminists we felt we should use this opportunity to put across our ideas.

BEGINNINGS OF THE SOCIALIST UNITY CAMPAIGN

Within this context, there was a feeling on the Left that a common platform should be found to build strength and prevent a split in the left of Labour vote and to form a united front against the growing right wing trend. This resulted in a series of open meetings attended by IMG, SWP, Workers League the Croydon and Brixton Collective (a local independent black revolutionary organisation), Big Flame, the West INdian Block, Socialist Feminists, a local gay group, Union Place (community print shop) and other unaligned socialists. From the first two meetings it became clear that a broad and democratic alliance was not possible. The SWP felt they could only work in an alliance in which they could choose the candidate and determine the organisation of the campaign. To the unaligned socialists, however, the very openness of the campaign was an important prerequisite of our involvement in it. A united campaign around a specified programme was also an important example to set.

The West Indian Block also withdrew and aligned itself with the Liberal Party. There was a vote taken by the meeting on whether to support the SWP candidate which resulted in the rejection of their proposals. In the light of this, they decided to mount their own campaign.

Before the actual date was announced socialist feminists had decided to call an open socialist feminist meeting to discuss the election, but the election date was very soon announced and was only three weeks away, so there was insufficient time for this meeting. However, socialist feminists called a meeting of women interested in working in Socialist Unity to discuss our role in the campaign and how to represent ourselves on the campaign committee which was to meet every morning. We rotated people who attended these committee meetings, in order to accommodate the different days on which we were free. This worked well and there was no lack of communication between us. It also meant that we tended to have a more equal chance to be involved in day to day decision making and organisation. Although we hadn't worked together as a group before, there was a supportive feeling among us.

No socialist feminist group as a whole, supported the campaign, but individuals from various South London hgroups and from NAC did. This reflects socialist feminist organisation, in which there is an overlap of women in different groups and as wide spectrum of opinion which makes it difficult to form a cohesive approach. Some of us writing rhs felt it was a problem that we could only act as individual socialist feminists, and not as representatives of formulated group policies. Others of us see this diversity of opinion as an essential part of socialist feminist groups, at the moment, s they were set up to make the link between socialism and feminism and to develop a socialist feminist practice. This opens the question of the role of socialist feminist groups and if it would be right for groups to try to committ themselves to a particular campaign, in a tightly organised way. In retrospect, it seems that acting as individuals, rather than as a unified group, did limit our autonomy and impact within the campaign. We feel that this is a problem that needs to be addressed within the socialist feminist current.

WHY WE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIALIST UNITY.

The discussion in one socialist feminist group illustrates the different views about the election. Some women felt is was important not to divide the Labour vote, and since we won't ultimately gt socialism through Parliament, we shouldn;t focus on election campaigns. So, some of these women worked in the All Lambeth Against Racism Movement which is a broad based campaign which has been active in the borough for about three years. Others of us wanted to work in the election campaign because it offered us the experience of having to explain our politics to local people, especially women, not already involved in feminism of left politics. We felt we'd learn a lot from this and the heightened political awareness during the election made it an important time to do it.

It seemed clear that the election was going to focus on race and we wanted to ensure that feminist issues were also taken up. We realised that the Women's Movement has tried to get away from traditional male left tactics, such as leafleting and canvassing, but the election provided us with the opportunity to make contact with the community. This was especially vital to us, as the South London Women's Centre is in the constituency and although it has been open for almost a year, it has not been used by local working class women.

We also wanted the opportunity of working with other left groups and to work out our relationship with them as socialist feminists. As the socialist feminist groups in S. London are study/discussion groups, we wanted the experience of working within a practical political framework and to learn about the different tendencies of the organised left. Also it was a chance to bring feminist politics into a socialist framework.

From the start of the campaign, there was a women's caucus which met before the weekly campaign meetings. The ideas of the caucus was to decide how best to make sure feminist issues were kept at the forefront of the campaign and to ensure women spoke at the open meetings, deciding what was important to bring up, giving each other support. The caucus called for the production of a separate women's leaflet and at an open meeting men were invited to volunteer to help write it. This was because of a fearthat 'womens issues' would be happily ignored by the men in the campaign, if they were able to see that the women were dealing with them. As it was, no men volunteered to help write it and so it was written by a

small group of women. Perhaps the men felt it was only a token gesture by the women. Perhaps in this way the men were in fact leaving 'women's issues' to the women and were prioritising the other political issues put forward in the election manifesto which laid out the platform Socialist Unity was standing on.

IN THE WOMEN'S LEAFLET we tried to draw attention to issues such as the spending cuts, unemployment, racist immigration controls and to indicate the way in which they specifically affect women. For example, we said "cuts in social spending mean the care of the old, young and sick have become the sole responsibility of women." We demanded nurseries, controlled by the community, for all who want them. "The amendment to the 1977 Finance Bill means that women will no longer be able to claim tax or child benefit for dependent children abroad." The leaflet made the point that "despite the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, women are still in jobs which are traditionally low paid and still only get 57% of average male earnings."

We stressed women's liberation is not merely concerned with work, but that we "can be taken advantage of because of economic, social and emotional dependence on men."

The leaflet was especially useful because we raised questions of sexuality and sexism in an accessible way and linked them to concrete demands, such as free and safe abortion. In the leaflet, Socialist Unity supported women's right to defend themselves against violence and rape, "because how do some men show their 'love' and 'protection' for women? In 1976, the courts dealt with 1,094 cases of rape, but the actual number is much bigger. And 17% of married women are beaten up regularly at home." The leaflet then demanded that the council provide women's centres and battered women's refuges for all who want and need them. The address of the women's centre was at the end of the leaflet.

All quotes here from the women's leaflet.

WHAT WE DID

During the course of the campaign we concentrated our activities on leafleting and talking to people in the street, on housing estates, in the market, in local squatting communities, nurseries and at Freemans (a mail order firm where a large number of workers are low paid and women). We did door to door canvassing. These were our main outlets, but because of lack of experience we didn't know how best to organise and prioritise our time. For example, should we have organised a public meeting for women on nurseries? Also at the NF meetings in Brixton during the campaign, there was a lack of particular feminist organisation. But how much impact was possible against the background of the media's manipulation of the election and the every successful exercise in state control at the NF MEETING? Despite the contact with working class people, especially between the Croydon and Brixton Collective and the black candidate, we were not able to be as effective as we would have liked, partly because of lack of previous contact with people outside the movement for example, at workplaces and with tenant groups. This was also a problem, to some extent, not only for socialist feminists, but also among other people in the campaign.

Internal Democracy

Rotating going to the committee meetings worked well for us. Union Place and the CBC rotated their people too. But there was the question of accountability of the committee to the campaign. Practical things like where to go to follow something up; the guy elected Press Agent went off during the campaign; a decision about the candidate following up possible votes was reversed, but no one knew by whom. In the event there was a mixture of collective working and more formal accountability.

HOW MUCH IMPACT DID WE HAVE?

We felt we learnt a lot. Certainly our presence in the campaign learnt that women's issues were taken up strongly. But perhaps we could have made even more impact. In retrospect, we could have stressed more strongly the need for a creche, especially during public meetings and canvassing in the evenings, as a way of making a political point. Some felt that there was a tokenism and trivialisation, at times, of our involvement. At the same time, we were disappointed that, because of pressure of time, we weren't able to have broader political discussions with members of the left groups. IMG and Big Flame had had experience of elections and led the organisation. There was an uneasy alliance between the CBC and the rest of the campaign. Trust was not easily built up.

We often got a good response when leafleting and canvassing and got into discussions on all the issues raised in the manifesto. Frequently, we felt the initial interest shown by lack people was because our candidate was black (he was a local post office worker) -there was a photo of him on the front of the manifesto. Those who were most interested in talking to us, were those who said they'd always voted Labour, but were fed up now and weren't going to vote this time. We found canvassing useful as it made us sharpen our arguments and present them in a straightforward way, instead of hiding behind vague terms. We found that as individuals from soc/fem groups we were often reacting to the left groups which had already worked out their policies. We should have discussed the issues raised in the manifesto, like to Soc. Unity policies on for example, housing, wages, where would the money come from. In this way we would have learnt more and have had more weight in the daily meetings.

NAC produced a leaflet detailing where the different candidates stood on abortion and leafleted local people.

In the broader context of assessing our role as socialist feminists in an electoral campaign, we found it difficult to distinguish between the limitations on our impact imposed by our lack of experience and knowledge of the electoral process and those limitations which are defined by the circumstances of an election. In the campaign there were a number of meetings organised on issues, such as 'sus' and the nationality laws which were directed towards specific groups, showing how these laws and proposed legislation, effect young people and black people, in particular. We thought this was a positive move and that we could have adopted similar tactics, to demonstrate, for example, how general issues-race, spending cuts and the Finance Bill - effect the lives of women as a social group. We also felt that we could have had more impact by relating issues, such as race and immigration, more closely to women, if there had been some representation of black women's groups on the committee. As it was, they decided not to participate in the campaign. We could not find out

their reasons. In spite of this Socialist Unity was the only group to put forward women's issues with any clarity and in any detail and upheld the rights of gay women and men in the manifesto; On the other hand, all the other groups failed to pay any direct or comprehensive attention to women, which indicated their attitude towards them, as a 'low priority' issue.

CONCLUSION

One criticism of Socialist Unity has been that it pops up out of nowhere and then disappears. But its main purpose is as an electoral alliance and the people and groups involved do continue working in the area, though under different names, ie as socialist feminists, those in anti racist work, in the anti sus campaign, for example. This can mean that the impact of their work has to be very great before they are recognised again, under the Socialist Unity banner in an election campaign. In Lambeth there was a feeling at the end of the campaign that it was possible and necessary to continue some kind of contact and cooperation between the different groups and independents, perhaps through the anti-sus campaign.

However, now the CBC has withdrawn, as have independents, to a large extent. At the same time, differences between Big Flame, independents and IMG have emerged, The differences were largely about the most effective way to keep our presence in the area and how to continue contact among socialists.

In the event of a General Election, socialist feminists will have to decide which campaign will best enable us to bring up feminist politics. We hope this contribution will help you to decide.

CBC stands for Croydon and Brixton Collective

By Liz Dronfield, Judith Arkwright, Rachel Langton, Ashley McKay, Linda Duckenfield

Fascism, Feminism and Wilhelm Reich

Having recently read Reich's 'Mass Psychology of Fascism' and some of his other writings, I am surprised that his ideas have not been more discussed within the Women's Liberation Movement. He devoted his life to the study of 'man's' sexuality, in particular sexual repression, its consequences and the struggle for sexual liberation. A psychoanalyst who studied under Freud, he was also a Marxist and his unique contribution lies in his synthesis of the ideas and theories of both. His trenchant criticisms of the revolutionary left for ignoring the importance of sexuality in the political struggle of the masses, and his attack on Soviet communism from the 1930's onwards as authoritarianism of the left, comparable to and as bad as authoritarianism of the right, earned him the active hostility of the left and forced him in to a political vacuum in which he concentrated on the struggle for sexual liberation of the individual as the major determinant in revolutionary progress.

His earlier writings of the 1920's and 30's however locate questions of sexual expression within the context of other social forces. 'The mass psychology of Fascism' is particularly interesting because in it he attempts to explain why fascism became a mass movement, why the revolutionary left was unable to combat it effectively, and what, in his view, was needed to prevent fascism - or authoritarianism of any kind, establishing itself. Living and working in Austria and Germany in the 1920's and early 30's and being active in the 'sexpol' movement

of the time, he was in an excellent position to observe the rise of fascism and its impact - the sexpol movement was an early casualty. His argument is quite complex and detailed, and is based upon a psychoanalytic view of how people behave. I don't propose to go into his argument in detail - those interested can read his books, some of which were reprinted by Penguin last year - but merely to outline the main points and try to draw out some implications for the feminist movement today.

Ideology as a Material Force

His starting point in 'The Mass Psychology of Fascism' is the question: why was the revolutionary left unable to counter the appeal of fascism to the masses in Germany and defeat it? His answer is this: Marx unveiled the dynamic of social production, this enabling the masses to see how they are oppressed and exploited economically and therefore how, at an economic level, they can overthrow their oppressors. What he did not, and could not, do since psychoanalysis had not, at the time of his writing, developed an adequate understanding of the human psyche, was unveil the relationship between the mode of social production and the character-structure of the masses at the individual level.

Marx however did not understand that there were factors in addition to the actual mode of production which affected the individual, even if he did not have the knowledge or time to spell them out. Reich quotes Marx:

“Man himself is the basis of his material production, as of every other production which he achieves. In other words, all conditions affect and more or less modify all of the functions and activities of man In this connection it can be indeed proven that all human conditions and functions, no matter how and when they are manifested, influence material production and have a more or less determining effect on them.” (Theory of surplus Value)

Hence, argues Reich, “we are not saying anything new, and we are not revising Marx, as is so often maintained: “All human conditions,” that is, not only the conditions that are a part of the work process, but also the most private and most personal and highest accomplishments of human instinct; also, in other words, the sexual life of women and adolescents and children, the level of the sociological investigation of these conditions and its application to new social questions.” (1)

The vulgar Marxists of his time however did not apply Marx's dialectical materialist method to the new information being uncovered by psychoanalysis. For them the human personality has remained essentially the same throughout history, Reich argues that, on the contrary, the personality of the individual responds to, is affected by and in its turn affects the social and economic structures of human society. Character-structure is itself a material force in the struggle between the oppressed and their oppressors; and the character-structure of each individual is molded within the family which therefore plays a crucial role in this struggle. Says Reich:

“The psychoanalysis of men and women of all ages, all countries, and every social class shows that: the interlacing of the socio-economic structure within the sexual structure of society and the structural reproduction of society take place in the first four or five years and

in the authoritarian family It (the Family) becomes the factory in which the state's structure and ideology are moulded." (2)

If this were not so, he argues, then one would expect women and adolescents, who are more oppressed than men because they are oppressed within the family as well as in the economic structure, to be more rebellious than men. In reality the opposite is the case - and one can only understand this by understanding the role of ideology as a material force, inhibiting, through its material manifestations, the impetus towards revolution. Herein lies the key to understanding both the inadequacies of the revolutionary left's opposition to fascism and the process by which fascism gained ascendancy.

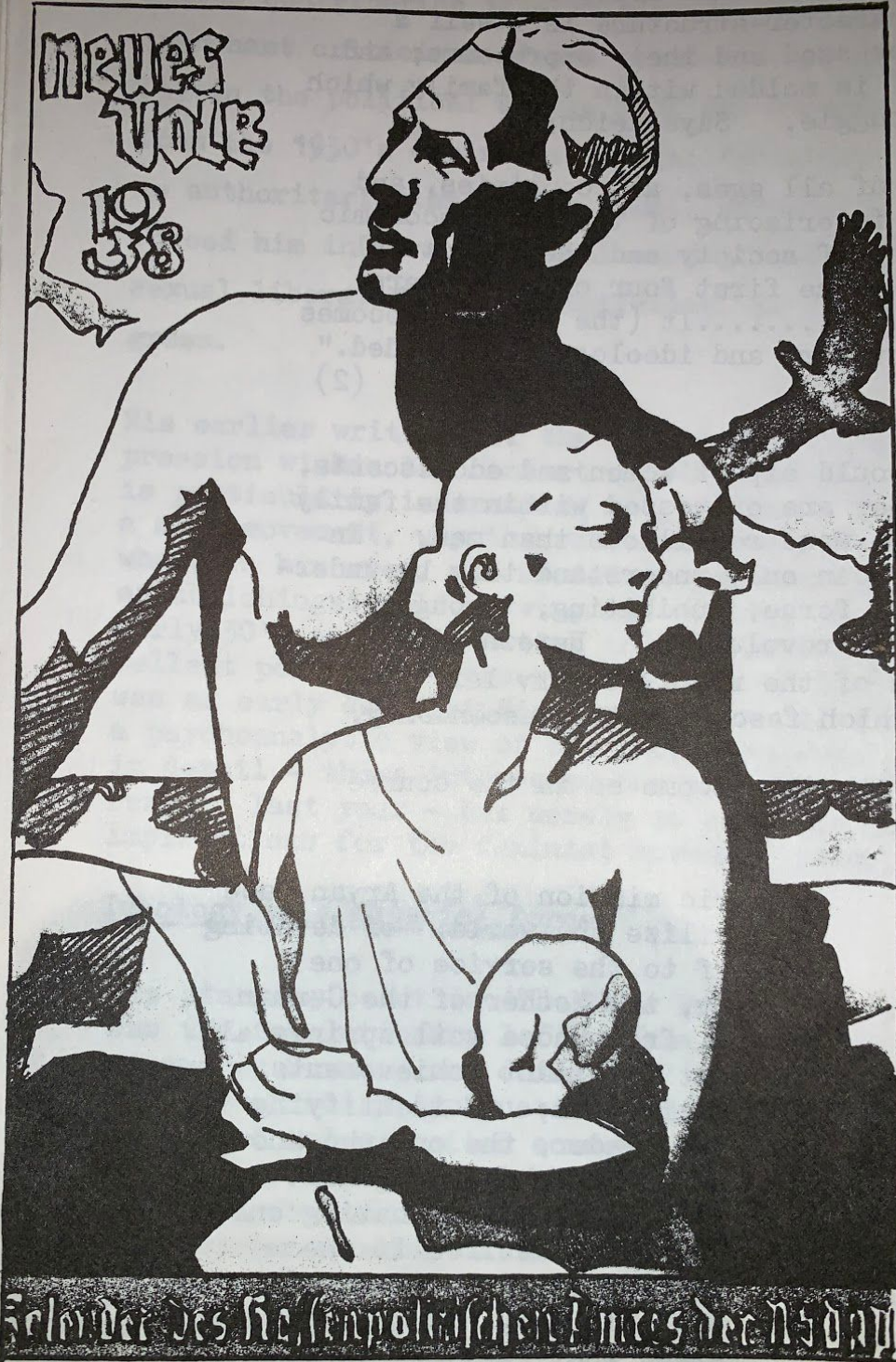
If all this is not crystal clear, I hope it will become so in the course of this article. Please read on!

THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITARIAN IDEOLOGY

Fascism became a mass movement, Reich argues, not because of its economic programme - which promised all things to all classes and was inherently contradictory - but because of its emotional appeal. The left tried to counter fascism by exposing the contradictions in its economic policies. What they should have done was to look at the ideas of National Socialism and the language in which they were expressed:- the idea of historic mission of the Aryan Race to civilise the world; of devoting oneself to the service of one's country, the Mother of the German people, from whose soil springs all the most brilliant achievements of civilisation; of identifying with the Leader, the one who knows what is right, whose judgement is infallible; of subordinating oneself and one's desires to the demands of one's Fatherland and Furrer. If they had tried to understand what feelings inside the masses of individuals these ideas appealed to, and combatted fascism at that level, Reich argues, the left would have gotten further.

What these ideas appealed to, he argues, is the repressed sexuality of the individual. The uniform, the goosestepping, the mass rallies and even the swastika itself - that is, the way in which fascism was organised at a mass level - also had definite sexual undertones. Hitler's ability to arouse the masses in his speeches in a quasi-orgasmic way is legendary.

But Hitler did not create fascism, although his personal gifts as an orator were an important element in the mobilisation of the masses - he actually personified it.



The ideal Aryan family as represented on the cover of the calendar the "New Volk," issued by the office of racial politics of the NSDAP.

Hitler came from the lower middle class - the class basis for the fascist movement - and he reflected in his own personality the character structure of the low middle classes: the rebellion/submissiveness generated by an authoritarian sex negating father, the need to identify with a cause/figure greater and more powerful than himself, to castigate the flesh

and its base sexual/sensual feelings and enjoyment of pleasure, to rid himself of guilt - his sexuality.

But sexuality does not lie down and die without a struggle; it is at the core of one's self-awareness and self-identity, it is the source of a person's response to the world, curiosity, creativity, social relationships - and ultimately the desire for a non-oppressive society. Suppressed sexuality seeps through the cracks in the psyche and insists on expression - distorted into sadomasochism, but sexual nevertheless. Suppressed sexuality in its extreme for finds its expression through the creation of an extreme form of authoritarian society.

Hitler acted as a vehicle for the expression of the fascistic emotions of the lower middle classes - and many workers, too - by developing a plan of action whereby these feelings could be given concrete expression - a programme of nationalist imperialism. The goal was to civilise (colonise) the world and save it from the degeneracy of communism, the enemy which was snapping at the heels of the civilized nations, both from within and without, threatening unimaginable horrors of national humiliation and sexual degradation.

RACISM AS JUSTIFICATION FOR IMPERIALISM

Racist ideologies, says Reich, are as old as imperialism - in order to make the expropriation of another people's lands or possessions acceptable to the mass of one's own people it is necessary to both emphasize the superiority of one's own race/nation and the inferiority of that which is to be, or is being, appropriated. Thus on the one hand, within German fascism there is the doctrine of the mission of the Aryan Race which must be kept pure in order to fulfill its historic role (miscegenation breeds weakness in the moral fibre of the Nation) and must be multiplied (but of course the weak, the handicapped, the 'runt of the litter' must be weeded out and prevented from breeding); and on the other hand the systematic denigration of the race to the expropriated.

The racism directed towards the Slavs is an example; they occupied the land around the German borders and in particular Russia, not only the 'traditional' enemy of the German people but also the home of the dreaded Bolshevism. Anti-semitism stemmed partly from the position of the Jews within the German economy - many German people benefitted from the expropriation of their property - and partly from their links with both Bolshevism (Karl Marx is referred to as 'the world Jew') and with international capitalism (they were supposed to control the United States Stock Exchange). The spread of international capitalism Germany - foreign owned Capital - as well as the development of German owned large scale industry and agriculture was a real threat to the lower middle classes and the Nazi Party was committed (in speeches and on paper, though not in practice) to its eradication along with Bolshevism.



THE CHARACTER STRUCTURE OF THE LOWER MIDDLE CLASSES

How did it come about that the German middle classes were so responsive to these ideas?
How had this particular 'character-structure' been implanted in them? The lower middle

classes Reich refers to as the basis of the fascist movement included the small farmers, businessmen, shopkeepers, and lower ranking officials in the government bureaucracies. What they all shared in common was an extreme form of the authoritarian patriarchal family structure. Amongst the small farmers, businessmen and shopkeepers the family structure reflected the family economy. The father owned the means of production and used the labour power of the members of his family to produce the family income - his income. His wife a helpmate, not an equal; his children a potential threat to his authority and privilege within the family who therefore had to be kept under strict control. The family of the petty government officials (Hitler's father was one of these) was similar but for different reasons. The petty official indistinguishable from the working class in terms of income, compensated for his lack of economic superiority by identifying himself with the state and its power. The authoritarianism of the state hierarchy was replicated within his family; his family members the bureaucracy, he its leader and head. The mechanism by which the women and children, including adult children were kept in their place within this family structure, and were made to accept their inferior position was the suppression of natural sexuality in childhood.

“The moral inhibition of the child's natural sexuality, the last stage of which is the severe impairment of the child's genital sexuality, makes the child afraid, shy, fearful of authority, obedient, 'good' and 'docile' in the authoritarian sense of the words”. (3)

What was started in this authoritarian - and of course God-fearing - family was continued by the Church, a central tenet of whose doctrine is that the expression of sexuality is the Original Sin (initiated by the female who is therefore not really huMAN, but needed for procreation - and dangerous because of her powers to seduce. Female sexuality consequently has to be extra firmly squashed.).

The concept of the Nation thus has its roots in the structure of the patriarchal and authoritarian family; Father/family; State/bureaucracy; Feuhrer/nation-race - and for some, God/people, particularly German people, past, present and future. The Mother is the earth from whose bounty the German people have built their brilliant civilisation; who sacrifices her sons to the historic mission of the Aryan Race (literally); who is the Virgin, undefiled by sexual pleasure, obedient to the will of God, a baby-machine, not a sexually seductive whore (like Eve) who enjoys and flaunts her sexuality and leads young men to their ruin (unless they join the Hitler Youth Movement, of course).

THE CHARACTER STRUCTURE OF PATRIARCHAL CLASS SOCIETY

How come the German lower middle classes developed this type of family structure? The answer to this question has less to do with the German middle classes and more to do with the ideological roots of their society - patriarchal class society in its capitalist form. (4) All patriarchal class societies are inherently authoritarian because they are based upon the negation of sexuality at an individual level. All patriarchal class societies in their capitalist form have the tendency to fascism built into the character structure of the individuals of the society, transmitted and reproduced within the family. The prevalence of this particular type of character structure varies between both societies and class with the societies, depending

upon the mode of social production and the relationship of the class to that mode of production.

Given certain constellations of economic, social (sexual) and political crises within capitalism, the middle class (in which the most authoritarian family structure develops) can dominate the class struggle, at least temporarily, at an ideological level (although the ruling class still retains control of the purse strings). This is what happened in Germany in the face of the international crisis of capitalism on the 1920's and '30's - parallel in other countries in the capitalist world by increasingly authoritarian - but not fascist - governments (ie. the ruling class maintained their ideological hegemony with judicious compromises or civil war (as in Spain). Fascism therefore is not a German or Italian phenomenon, explained by reference to specific peculiarities of cultural or 'racial' characteristics; it is a phenomenon of patriarchal class society and could have occurred - or indeed could occur again - in any capitalist society.

Sexual negation is the psychic root of all patriarchal class societies. It is the source of the contradictory, irrational and anti-social emotions and behaviour in individuals and the masses. Its appearance within the structure of early human society, which was matriarchal, sexuality affirming and classless, came about when men began to develop an interest in establishing paternity rights over children and thereby secured the possibility of the accumulation of wealth and the differentiation of the members of the matriarchal clan into classes based upon patriarchal family units. (5) Establishing rights of paternity over children meant restricting the sexual activity of women and ultimately negating her sexuality, allowing her only procreative function. Male children also became a threat to the patriarch for being male they presented a challenge to his authority and had a material interest in replacing him in the seat of power; hence their sexuality also had to be repressed in order to make them submissive - psychological castration through sexual guilt. Sex For Procreation Only is an essential ingredient of the ideology of patriarchal class society taught within the family and given mystical support through patriarchal religion.

It lends itself particularly well to the needs of nationalistic imperialism (fascism) for by emphasizing the maternal nature and function of women it helps to increase the birth rate (necessary for cannon fodder and colonisation), keeps women economically dependent on the male and out of the labor force (unless of course her labour power is needed, in which case arrangements can be made for her children), and, at the same time negates any idea of sex for pleasure thus facilitating the channelling of suppressed sexual energy in to the service of the state through identification with Nation and Fatherland. Negated and suppressed sexuality in this process does express itself - but in perverted ways. The prevalence of sadomasochistic expressions of sexuality provides a concrete justification for the view that sexuality is disgusting and must be suppressed - a specific example of ideology manifesting itself in material form.

Look at the swastika -



Reich argues that if you look at the swastika long enough, you will see that it depicts two people having intercourse.

THE WORKING CLASS AND FASCISM

While the authoritarian patriarchal family is to be found in some form in all class societies, it is not found in the same form within all social classes in any society. As wealth accumulated

in the hands of a few, it became the family structure of the ruling class alone, for whom it continued to serve a specific economic function. It spread to other classes in society through the dominant ideology and the more the oppressed classes rebel the greater is the interest of the ruling class in imposing the dominant ideology (and its accompanying family structure) upon them through religion, example or propaganda.

The ideology of the oppressed classes stems from their own experience of the world and their place within the class structure and is in direct opposition to that of the ruling class. The revolutionary ideology of the working class, however, is tempered by the extent to which they have adopted and internalised the dominant ideology and reproduce it themselves within their own family structures. Moreover, Reich argues, the sexuality-suppressing consequence of the dominant ideology inhibits even the consciousness of oppression:

“The suppression one’s primitive material needs compasses a different result than the suppression of one’s sexual needs. The former incites to rebellion, whereas the latter -- inasmuch as it causes sexual needs to be repressed withdraws them from consciousness and anchors itself as a moral defence - prevents rebellion against both forms of suppression. Indeed, the inhibition of rebellion itself is unconscious.” (6)

Thus within the working class there are tendencies towards both the struggle for freedom and the need for authoritarianism. In the Germany of the 1920’s with the defeat of the workers’ movement, the way was open for the conservative aspects of their personality to gain ascendancy.

“Whether he would give up his conservative tendencies and arrive at a complete consciousness of his actual responsibility in the production process, ie. at a revolutionary consciousness, depended solely on the correct or incorrect leadership of the leadership of the revolutionary party. This the communist assertion that it was the Social Democrat policies that put fascism in the saddle was correct from a psychological viewpoint.

Disappointment in Social Democracy accompanied by the contradiction between wretchedness and conservative thinking, must lead to fascism if there are no revolutionary organisations. For example, following the fiasco of the Labour Party’s policies in England, in 1930-31, fascism began to infiltrate the workers who, then, in the election of 1931, cut away to the Right instead of going over to communism.” (7)

Hence the support of a substantial proportion of the working class for fascism, dostered by the anti-capitalist propaganda of National Socialism aimed deliberately at the material interests of the working class.

THE ROLE OF THE SEXUAL STRUGGLE WITHIN THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

The revolutionary left, says Reich, ignored questions about the family and the sexual life of the masses, dismissing them as irrelevant to the economic struggle, as merely ‘ideological’ questions which could be sorted out after the revolution. His comments about the left in the 1930’s have a familiar ring about them:

“The revolutionary movement has always committed the grave error of regarding sexuality as a ‘private matter’. It is not a private matter for political reaction, which always rides on two tracks at the same time: on that of economic policies and that of ‘moral renewal’. Until now the freedom movement has travelled on one track only. What is needed therefore, is to master the sexual question on a social scale to make the sexual question a part of the total campaign..... The freedom movement has always made the mistake of mechanically transferring the political slogans from the area of trade-unionism and political struggle to all the other areas of social life, instead of developing a view for each area of human life and activity appropriate to that area and that area alone.” (8)

The struggle for sexual liberation is an essential part of the total revolutionary struggle.

“The sex-economic fight is a part of the total fight of those who are exploited and suppressed against those who exploit and suppress.” It is a waste of time “to decide just how important this fight is and what place it assumes within the workers’ movement It is merely important to stick to the basic conception, namely that the economic form also determines the sexual form also determines the sexual form also determines the sexual form cannot be changed unless the economic and social forms are changed.” (9)

In the synopsis of Reich’s views I have concentrated upon (and elaborated at times) those areas of his argument which have the most relevance to feminism today. Reich was not a feminist (if any man could be a feminist) and he misses out on an important facet of ideology-as-a-material-force - the relationship between the sexes. He sees patriarchal class society as essentially a class society based upon the patriarchal family unit. What he does not see is that men of all classes have a material interest in internalising the ideology of patriarchal class society, because of the power that it gives them over women within the patriarchal family. This there is another dimension to be added to Reich’s analysis. The right that the patriarchal family structure gives to men to exploit both the labour and the sexuality of women backed up by custom and law, is reflected in material form in women’s position within the family. Thus he can see:

“It must be pointed out that it is not her material dependency on the man in the family that is a nuisance to a woman. Essentially, it is the sexual restriction that goes with this dependency that is a burden. The proof of this is that those women who have succeeded in completely suppressing their sexuality not only endure this economic dependency easily and unresistingly, but even affirm it.” (10)

-not seeing that the imposed economic dependence is itself a material factor which increases the emotional dependence and the need to internalise the ideology which justifies it. Nevertheless, at a theoretical level he understands that the sexual liberation of women is a key factor within the revolutionary struggle, because it is upon the sexual negation of women that patriarchal class society is based. Hence:

“Sexually awakened women, affirmed and recognised as such, would mean the complete collapse of the authoritarian ideology.” (11)

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Many of the ingredients which prepared the ground for fascism as a mass movement led by the middle classes in Germany are present today in Britain - and elsewhere in the capitalist world. There is the international crisis of capitalism; the expansion of multinational corporations and international capital which threatens the middle classes from above, and the organised militancy of the trade unions which threatens them from below; there is the spread of sexual 'permissiveness' and the ideas of sexual liberation organised within the women's and gay liberation movement which threaten the established sexual order; there is the national chauvinism and racism of our imperialist past which is directed against immigrants from the ex-British colonies; there is increasing concern expressed within the major political parties about the disintegration of the family and its consequences in the 'anti-social' behaviour of youth; there is the Tory Party, poised for parliamentary victory which cannot make up its mind about whether to champion the interest of international capital (Edward Heath) or the national bourgeoisie (Margaret Thatcher). All capitalist societies are becoming more authoritarian, state-controlled, in the face of economic crisis. On a happier note, the working class has not yet been defeated, this a crucial factor is missing.

Nevertheless, fascism as a mass movement - nationalistic imperialism - appears to be a distinct possibility, as both a salve to the wounded pride of a previously 'great' nation and as a desperate attempt to solve the economic crisis at home at the expense of other countries. Women would undoubtedly be in the first line of fire, together with immigrants for different but integrally related reasons. The Women's Liberation Movement has a crucial role in the defeat of fascism - and ultimately in the overthrow of authoritarian patriarchal class society. Our success, and that of the revolutionary movement as a whole will depend upon our ability to integrate the struggle for sexual freedom with that of economic freedom at a mass level.

In practical terms this means raising questions of the family structure and sexuality and discussing them in a sexuality - affirming way. This is most easily done with a positive results at a group, rather than an individual level. Says Reich:

"When I talk to a sexually inhibited woman in my office about her sexual needs I am confronted with her entire moralistic apparatus" (induced partly because he is male!) "It is difficult for me to get through to her and to convince her of anything. If however, the same woman is exposed to a mass atmosphere, is present, for instance at a rally at which sexual needs are discussed clearly and openly in medical and social terms, then she doesn't feel herself to be alone. After all, the others are also listening to 'forbidden things'. Get individual moralistic inhibition is offset by a collective atmosphere of sexual affirmation, a new sex economic morality, which can paralyse (not eliminate!) her sexual negation because she herself has had similar thoughts when she was alone. Secretly, she herself has mourned her lost joy of life or yearned for sexual happiness. The sexual need is given confidence by the mass situation; it assumes a socially accepted status Thus it is not a question of

helping, but of making suppression conscious of dragging the fight between sexuality and mysticism into the light of consciousness and translating it in to social action.” (12)

We are beginning to do this more and more within the Women’s Liberation Movement. Our demand for sexual liberation has ben, since the last national WLM Conference at the top of the list within the context of which all the other demands are now placed. Our activities around male power and sexual suppression are becoming increasingly important areas of our work - Women’s Aid, Rape Crisis Centres, Reclaim the Night, to mention some of the most obvious. Since we are clearly moving in a direction which Reich would be approved of, it seems to me that his theories have a great deal to offer us in understanding the dynamic of our oppression - and its overthrow.

Penny Remfry

Notes

1. Mass Psychology of Fascism p.17 (Noonday Press Edition) Also printed by Penguin
2. Op. Cit. p.30
3. Op. Cit. p.30
4. All patriarchal societies are, historically, class societies; the vast majority of class societies have been patriarchal.
5. Reich explains how this came about in detail, in ‘The Invasion of Compulsory Sex Morality’ (Penguin)
6. Mass Psychology of Fascism p.31
7. Op. Cit. p.73
8. Op. Cit. p.184-5
9. Op. Cit. p.184
10. Op. Cit. p.199
11. Op. Cit. P.105
12. Op. Cit. P.185

WHO ARE THE TERRORISTS?

From the Guardian 27/1/79

An ex-SS man said in Bonn yesterday that his wife of 25 years left him after watching the television series Holocaust, about the Nazi mass murder of Jews. She told him she intended to build a fence round the house with the words “A Nazi murderer lives here” painted on it --

But something the press over here have not reported on:-

For the past three years nine people, four of them women have been facing trial accused of murdering 250000 people in a concentration camp called Majdanek in what is now Poland. This camp had a high proportion of women, and the Poles claim that the overall figures may be as high as 1 million.

There is a discrepancy between these figures because where people died in gas chambers there is little evidence that people were killed at all. And so the neo-fascists can argue that nobody was killed, and all the stories are invented.

The women and men facing trial are not remanded in custody; they are allowed to live at home as normal citizens. Their defence are spinning out the trial for as long as possible in the hope that they will be pardoned when the new amnesty law for war crimes comes into force later this year. Although it is estimated that 1300 people worked in the camp only 14 have ever stood trial; this is also the first time women have been tried. Compare the treatment of these ex-Nazis with what happens to Germans who are only suspected of feminist, socialist, or pacifist activities. Denounced in the press as terrorists, they are put in solitary confinement to await trial.

Women and the Family in Nazi Germany

This paper is reprinted from the Women against Racism and Fascism conference papers, we hope Catherine Hall doesn't mind.

These are brief notes put together from some of the published material on women and the family in Nazi Germany. I am basically trying to document for easy reference some of the theory and practice of Nazi Germany in relation to women.

What did the Nazis think about women?

Hitler 1934:

"If we say the world of the man is the state, the world of man is his commitment, his struggle on behalf of the community, we could then perhaps say that the world of the woman is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home. But where would the big world be if no one wanted to look after the small world? How could the big world exist, if there was no-one to make the task of caring for the small world the centre of their lives? No, the big world rests upon this small world! The big world cannot survive if the small world is not secure!"

The basic Nazi views could be summarised as:-

1. Race is the fundamental division between peoples
2. The importance of the survival of the race necessitates militarism.
3. The numbers of the Aryan race must be increased - consequently women are crucial as childbearers. (This doesn't apply to other races, eg. the Jews).
4. Within the Aryan race the primary distinction is that of sex - there is an insistence on the separation of the sexes. Men and Women should come together mainly for procreation. Industrial society had undermined this natural division - the Nazis wanted to return to what they saw as the ancient Teutonic relationship where man is essentially productive and woman essentially reproductive, man creative and woman imitative. They are against the employment of women outside the home and they are against the treatment of the sexes as equal; therefore, they are fundamentally opposed to equal rights for women.

What was Nazi policy on women and the family?

1. Women's Work

The Nazis were reacting against the feminism of the 1920's and the increasing independence of German women. The Weimar Republic had an essentially liberal line on women's rights. Throughout the inter-war years there were roughly 2m. more women than men - many women had to work. Most of the work they did was specifically women's work - eg. a very high proportion of women workers were 'family assistants' in family businesses and another large proportion were in white collar work which was expanding very rapidly. Nevertheless it seems that considerable advances took place in the social and economic position of German women in the 20's and this bred resentment which found expression in the Nazi movement. The economic crisis of the 20's and 30's is crucial to understanding why the Nazis were able to implement their anti-feminist policies. They mounted, for example, a campaign against women working which in a period of depression was bound to be popular. In concrete terms, however, it did not have very much effect since the sexual division of labour ensured that men did not want women's jobs. The proportion of women in the labour force did go down though as a result of rearmament and the creation of new work for men. The basic Nazi line, as has been said, was that married women should not work outside the home. But by the late 30's the question of women's work was becoming very embarrassing - women's employment was essential to the rearmament programme and the war effort. This obviously created a serious ideological problem.

From 1936 onwards there was an acute shortage of labour. By the end of 1938 there were 1 million vacancies. The labour shortage was seen to be slowing down the war effort and increasing the strength of the workers. It proved difficult to attract women since the work offered was unskilled or semi-skilled and low paid. Meanwhile inducements were offered to women to stay at home and have more children. There was a fundamental contradiction between the demands of the labour shortage and the ideology of domesticity and the government couldn't make up their minds what they thought about it. Consequently, the campaign to get women to work was not likely to be successful since it was so ambiguous.

In 1939 the crisis in industry came to a head - the armed forces were pushing for the conscription of women. Goering was very opposed - he wanted to rely on the prisoners of war. There was a split between the military and the party ideologues - in the few pronouncements which Hitler made he tended to come down on the side of the latter.

In January 1943 there was a further crisis with the advance of the Red Army. A very weak measure of conscription was finally accepted. It was thought that it would be very unpopular (though it wasn't at all in England). The movement of women into the labour force was only seen as a temporary measure, necessary because of the war. Not until '41 did the number of women in employment exceed the figure for '28 and there were never as many women workers as in the First World War. It is very difficult to estimate whether this was a factor in the Nazi defeat.

2. Women at Home

A central Nazi policy was the importance of maintaining the race. In the '20's the size of the family was going down drastically - this was a phenomenon common to all advanced industrial societies. The Nazis saw feminist demands about abortion and birth control as very dangerous. Feminism was seen by fascists as a powerful enemy - worth fighting both on its own account and because of its associations with socialism and communism. Koonz argues that Nazi women were allowed more independence up to the seizure of power in 1933; their courage and loyalty had been required in the years of struggle for power. Once the Nazis had gained control of the state they give more emphasis to the qualities of obedience and motherliness in women. The Nazi women's organisations were purged and the more independent women went. From summer '33 marriage loans were made available if women gave up their jobs on marriage - repayments were cut if the women had children. There was a great increase the birth rate - financial inducements and compensation, improvements in welfare and maternity services propaganda about the status of wife and mother, repressive machinery against birth control and abortion and family allowances, There was a clear important in the cash situation in millions of households though the financial aid did nothing like cover the cost of a child. There was incessant propaganda about domesticity. Maternity clinics were set up and infant and maternal mortality rates went down (the health of women workers was an important area of concern also). Infertility was treated free. Laws on sterilisation for women who were handicapped or not eugenically sound were tightened up. Mothers Schools were set up to teach domestic economic and childcare. Women were to make their contribution to the Third Reich as housewives and mothers. There were lots of opportunities for voluntary work - which became an important part of the welfare services. After all this there was a modest increase in the number of births - this was absolutely against the trend in other countries. There is a great debate among historians as to whether this was due to Nazi policies - as yet it is unclear. One of the interesting side effects is that there was more tolerance of unmarried mothers. By the late '30's the material situation of the working class household was improving - wages were up and there were improved welfare facilities. In real term income was probably higher than it had been in the late '20's. However Mason argues that the form of domesticity which Nazism encouraged was middle class, home-centred and was fundamentally indifferent to both the appeal that women should work for the national cause (the status was in staying at home) and the appeal to have large families. The policy was successful only in so far as it assisted more people to marry, have few children and make an increasing distinction between men's and women's spheres. Nazi propaganda hit upon the reconciliatory function of family life and people were responsive to this - as economic and political pressures became more difficult so the family as a private sphere became more important. But, as Stephenson points out, the existence of the family was in some ways an obstacle to Nazi attempts at total control - Nazi organisations, therefore, had to try and exert some influence over individual members of the family in the hope that they would permeate the family as a whole and encourage corporate loyalties to the Nazi regime.

Conclusion

It is clear that Nazi policies on women were popular - though it is possible that a re-working of some of the evidence by feminists might well bring new evidence to light. It is also clear

that the policy was essentially a reaction against the effects of the development of industrial capitalism - particularly the increasing necessity for women's work, the move to the smaller family and the move away from the definition of woman only as mother. It was an attempt to revert to a traditional view of women but in the economic and social conditions of the time it was an impossible position to maintain and led to the contradictions which have been analysed.

Useful Reading

Tim Mason: Women in Nazi Germany in 'History Workshop Journal' nos. 1 and 2

Jill Stephenson: Women in Nazi Society

Clifford Kirkpatrick: Nazi Germany: its women and family life

Claudia Koonz: Mothers in the Fatherland: Women in Nazi Germany in Bridenthal & Koonz: Becoming Visible: Women in European History

REVIEWS: Women in Nazi Society by Jill Stephenson: Published by Croom Helm, 1975

Feminists participating in anti-fascist movements are conscious of the need to in these movements to a perspective of opposing sexism. It is an obvious aspect of anti-fascist activity to oppose racism, but it is not yet an obvious aspect of anti-fascist activity to oppose sexism. We know that the right often understands the questions of the family and sexuality better than the left, that the practical connections exist when the National Front stewards SPUC meetings or calls for the repeal of the 1967 Abortion Act in its election manifestos. But we need to know much more. We have to examine how far sexism as well as racism is the breeding ground for fascism; how much are the fascists using sexism as an issue on which to build their organisations; and how do we make the relationship between sexism and fascism manifest when sexism in the form of the family and the sexual division of labour is perceived as natural by millions of class-conscious workers who reject racism and fascism?

One way we can begin to explore this relationship is by examining what happened to women under fascist regimes. Jill Stephenson's book provides a detailed study of the position of women in Nazi Germany. She illustrated the significance of fascism for women in terms of population policies which meant compulsory sterilisation for non-Aryan women and compulsory breeding of the master race for Aryan women; emphasis on women's place being in the home and on the naturalness of the sexual division of labour; and the removal of equal rights that women had obtained in the professions and public life. Her account shows that way fascist policy towards women developed and altered in response to the fascists' overall attempts to maintain power. For instance the treatment of unmarried Aryan mothers became increasingly "liberal" as the fascists placed their need to expand the Aryan race before their need to maintain the family. Moreover, despite their belief that women's place was in the home the Nazis did at times encourage women to work outside the home when there was a labour shortage.

While the book does not state any clear political perspective on either fascism or the oppression of women it is well worth reading for the information it contains and the

connections it established between fascist ideology and the oppression of women, as indicated in the following extract:-

“Within the ‘Aryan’ race, the primary division was that of sex, providing two complementary, not antagonistic, elements which each played a predetermined part in the gigantic jigshaw which was the life of the Volksgemeinschaft (national community). As Frau Scholtz-Klink, leader of the Nazi women’s organisation, said in 1936, ‘the guiding principle of German women today is not to campaign against men but to campaign alongside men’. While men very definitely played the leading role in the Nazi State, with women excluded from political life, the Nazis did not accept that they were subordinating women completely to men; rather, they claimed, they were drawing a distinction - the natural distinction - between the areas of activity of men and women, so that each sex might better perform its function for the good of the nation. This insistence on the separation of the sexes is a crucial feature of Nazi policy towards women, in all areas of life. The sexes, then, were to come together only for what was seen as the most important function of all, procreation. The Nazis turned to the ancient Teutonic relationship - or, at least, what they thought it had been - where man was the warrior and women the homemaker. They claimed that civilisation, especially in industrial society, had undermined the relationship between the sexes by altering the ‘natural’ roles of man and woman, and held that the differences between the sexes should not be denied or ignored, but gladly accepted, and indeed emphasised.

In the Nazi view, the chief difference was that man was essentially productive, and women fundamentally reproductive. By the same token, man was creative while woman was imitative. Thus, women’s position in Nazi society was to be one which gave her the chance to exhibit her ‘natural’ qualities, sympathy, self-sacrifice and comradeship, rather than demanding of her the ‘unnatural’ attributes of independence, intellectual ability or a competitive spirit. Following from this, then, the Nazis were at once ideologically opposed to the employment of women outside the home, to more than a very limited amount of academic education for girls, and, above all, to feminists and all proponents of equal rights for women, who, they claimed, treated the sexes as identical when they were rather ‘gleichwertig aber nicht gleichartig’ (equivalent but not the same). (pp. 8-9).

Liz Lawrence

Further Reading

Grunberger, Richard, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, London, 1971

Kirkpatrick, Clifford, *Women in Nazi Germany*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1938

Mason, Tim, *Women in Nazi Germany Part 1*, History Workshop No.1, Spring 1976

Mason, Tim, *Women in Germany 1925-1940, Family, Welfare and Work*, History Workshop No. 2, Autumn 1976

‘The Enemy Within’ - a play by Grazyna Monvia performed by MAJOR DIVERSION

As a German woman, active in the German and British Women's Liberation movement brought up as a member of the 'post-war' generation, I will try to give my impressions about the play 'THE ENEMY WITHIN'.

I saw the play twice and would recommend it to everybody, who wants to know how the mystification of women was achieved under Hitler's fascism. The play offers a starting point for looking at the role of women in fascist societies. The ideology of fascism is embodied in the main character, and in this way the audience gets a very realistic picture of the period between 1933 and 1945. The play is set in Berlin against the background of the rise and fall of the Third Reich. It traces the related fortune of three women (Magda, her mother, and Sophie, her socialistic friend) from 1932, prior to Hitler's accession to power, to May 1945 after the final destruction of Berlin by the Russians.

The play raises very important questions-

Why did so many women become involved with the Nazis? Why didn't those who disagreed prevent it happening? How were women's lives affected by the fascism in Germany?

The play shows a typical middle class family. Magda is a well educated, idealistic girl who has had a sheltered upbringing. Her parents own a bakery. Her father joins the S.S early on and we can see how the middle class benefited considerably under fascism - for example: Magda's parents acquire several other bakeries that used to be owned by Jews. The play creates a vivid picture of school life, authoritarian family life, and leisure time spent in the Hitler Youth Movement.

The main question the play raises is why did women become involved in fascism? The play answers this by showing the appeal of Hitler's early speeches about equality, peace and unity. It shows how easy it was to become involved in the Hitler Youth Movement and the BDM (Bund deutscher Madchen).

Unlike Italian women, women in Germany were mobilised. They had to join the BDM, they had to observe a 'Pflichtjahr' after school (a year of work-service). And also when a woman was 18 years old, she would have to spend at least a year doing the 'Reichsarbeitsdienst' (another type of work for the nation). The BDM organised meetings, camps, etc. In these camps women were trained in farming, housekeeping, and National Socialist doctrine. The girls leader Scholtz-Klink said in September 1935 - 'We never want to see equality of German women with men. We see the rights and interests of women only in connection with the needs of the German nation.'

We think that these two factors are not enough to answer the question of why women became involved. Perhaps the fact that the status of motherhood was more highly regarded under fascism than it had ever been was crucial in involving so many women in fascism. National Socialism extended the idea of the nation, that a woman had to fulfil her natural role to do housework and bring up children. The woman is emotionally and financially dependant on her husband. In fascism, because of their role, women seem to become very important. Women have often been blamed for being the ones who brought Hitler to power. By doing this, men imply that the blame lies with women, who were too stupid to know better. But C.

Loepcke argues that women did not vote for Hitler in large numbers until the Nazis came to power. However, feminists must try to come up with real answers about women who joined the Nazis.

The other main question raised by the play is why did those who disagreed not prevent the rise of fascism? The socialist resistance movement is represented in the character of Sophie. Sophie tries to explain that Hitler too wants unity and equality, but only in order to destroy and overthrow all non-Germans, annihilate the unions, to discriminate against and kill workers, gays, gypsies and to oppress women; all this in order to build up an imperialism with a dictatorship over the whole world.

In the background of the play, we see that there was a big resistance movement, but little of this is shown as we are looking at the middle-class life of the main character.

Magda has a chance to become a socialist, but she never realises the threat of fascism. The play shows how frightening it must have been to disagree with the commonly accepted views even with friends or relations in private. Sophie is forced to leave school, because of her political views and actions. She ends up working as a prostitute.

I'm not quite sure if this is Sophie's way to survive or a way of fighting in the resistance movement, because in the war prostitutes were sometimes comrades of the resistance. Because of their illegal work they were very good at gathering and spreading information. However, it was dangerous for women to live as prostitutes. They were prosecuted (laws forbade prostitution because it was officially 'immoral', but on the other hand prostitution continued as it has always done ever since marriage has existed). Often they were put into concentration camps, where they often had to work for the S.S. men as prostitutes.

At the end of the play, I felt like standing up and shouting: 'Never again fascism - never again war.'

Do you think it could happen again? This question is often asked of Germans. Those who lived under fascism, deny the possibility entirely. 'In that manner?' 'no' 'out of question'. And if you ask then 'Why not'? They say: 'Oh, people would prevent it. We went through it. So we know it.'

People, especially the questioned Germans, always have an excuse for their passiveness. 'We didn't know all that'. 'We didn't want it'. But (if you look into the books you can see) as early as the 'Weimar Republic' the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands) warned about the coming National-Socialism. Hitler explained his ideas in his book 'Mein Kampf' in the early 20s.

From my experience many Germans don't really know how fascism came about and they face the new development in our society uncritically and passively. I think we should analyse and re-study fascism in Germany and Italy. This has been neglected all these years. This has to be done by the war-generation and my generation. (We hardly ever talked about this at school).

And, we as women, should start to think about the connection of our role in fascism in the past and today.

Major Diversion are at [address]

Franzisku and Fiona

Finding a Voice - Asian Women in Britain by Amrit Wilson; published by Virago, 1978

Published by Virago, this book gives a moving and perceptive picture of the lives of Asian women in Britain. Women from all walks of life (housewives, factory workers, school girls) tell in their own words, in words whose richness is not lost through translation, of their predicaments, fear and hopes. Amrit Wilson's pointed comments enhance and lend weight to the personal narratives through the strength of the narratives, and the strength of character behind these, could well be taken on their own.

Amrit Wilson takes women from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and East Africa (the majority having come from a joint family background), and traces the changes in their position. I think the book does not stress enough the fact that the joint family evolved as a response to, and defence against, harsh and exploitative economic conditions; very similar to the closely knit, working class community in Britain described by Young and Wilmott. Neither does the book analyse sufficiently the reasons behind the disintegration of the Asian joint Family in Britain. However, Amrit Wilson points out that although the joint family lay at the root of an Asian woman's oppression, it was also supportive, where the work, centred around birth, childrearing, housekeeping, death, was all shared by women of the same household. The transition from the warmth and the sisterhood of the joint family to the impersonal and often unheeding welfare capitalism proves a painful one. The disregard, the contempt which is shown by health authorities, school teachers, social workers, to the needs of these women is described, as is the humiliation they suffer at the hands of immigration officers, doctors, shop stewards (all in the main white, all the main male).

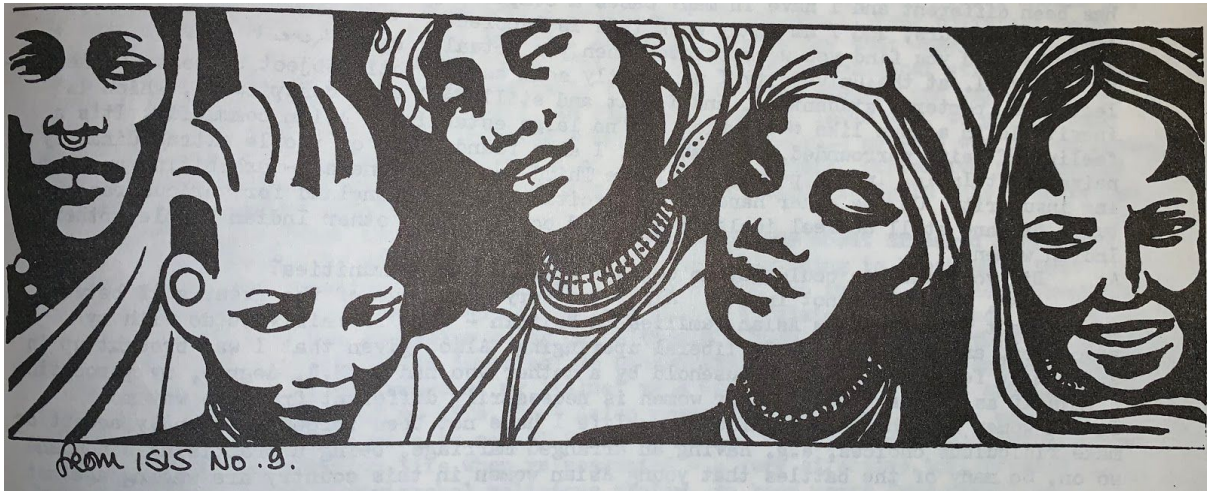
The breakdown of the Asian joint family means that the woman is totally isolated at home, this isolation being re-inforced by the racism that is prevalent. As the author points out in the introduction, having indirectly or inadvertently brought Asian women to Britain, the racism of the state and the racism of British society define the wider position of Asian women in this country - as the lowest paid and most exploited workers, or as the wives and daughters of such workers. The struggles at Imperial Typewriters and Grunwicks are described, as are the day to day individual struggles against arranged marriages, the dowry system, the choice of a career, the choice of which kind of dress to wear.

The book ends with the grim account of an elderly woman who was forced to move into an Old People's Home (unheard-of in an Asian family formerly) and who remarks: "Happiness - why is it taken away from us?"

Which way liberation, and what sort of liberation for Asian women want? Not within a nuclear family, no knuckling under wage labour for the sake of independence, not a move from the

sari to hot pants, from breast feeding to the bottle, is the answer which emerges clearly from the voices these women. The alternative? "These are early, early days in a conscious struggle".

Parita Trivedy



INTERVIEW with an Asian Feminist

S. is an Indian woman living in England who has been involved in the Women's Liberation Movement in the country for a few years. Anna Briggs from the Scarlet Women Collective went to talk to her about her experience of racism in Britain, her upbringing in a country influenced by British colonialism, and her feeling about her own life and the WLM.

A: How did you come to being here - what was it in your upbringing which made you contemplate coming to a British university?

S: I went to a Protestant missionary girls' school in Bombay - in relation to Indian standard we were a 'well-off' family, which my mother would describe as lower middle class; my father died when I was five, and me and my brother were brought up by my mother. I did well as college and realised that the only chance I would have of being independent from my family would be if I were to leave Bombay. So I fought long and hard to get a 25 year loan scholarship (most scholarships are open to men or to members of particular religious groupings) and came to University. This choice was determined by the fact that was a campus university, and given that I didn't know anybody in England, it seemed sensible to come to a campus.....

A: When I first saw and met you at women's conference etc., I felt almost hostile to you because you have such a correct upper class English accent. I'm sure a lot of women besides me see you as an 'honorary white' woman - which is one of the things you've been complaining about.

S: My accent has little to do with me and a lot to do with white English women who more or less controlled our lives at school At school all of us went through a very Anglicised education system, so much so that no Indian religion/cultural values were even recognised.

It was almost like being at school in England, the only reminder of being in India was occasionally when the white teachers made it very clear that they were there, teaching us, doing us immense favours and that we ought to be eternally grateful I know that a lot of white women here do see me as an 'honorary white' and I am angry about this, because it very clearly indicates that they haven't done very much thinking or investigating about the life-time inheritance of British Imperialism that I cannot shake off. I know that in my case white women do not have to make very much, if any, effort to communicate with me, and so on, and in the process they seem to forget that a great part of my identity now has been created and conditioned by the legacy of British imperialism, and in fact I am Indian and my life as been vastly different from theirs, my 'world view' has been different and I have in many cases a completely different set of experiences from theirs/yours, and I am angry when this is ignored.

A: How did you find you were treated when you actually came here?

S: Well, at University I was mostly seen as an exotic object by most of the men - lecturers, porters, students... and I felt and still feel very conspicuous, which is inevitable in a town like this which has no large established Asian community. It's a feeling of being surrounded, outnumbered. I also found a lot of people extraordinary naive about India, Indian people, well the Third World in general - exhibiting an amazing insularity. On the other hand, it was exciting to be in England for various reasons.. But I did and still do feel isolated and need contact with other Indian people, other Indian women.

A: Did you find you could get in contact with Indian communities?

S: No, especially not in. Also I am very conscious of the great gulf between me and most working class Asian families in Britain - this is mainly to do with my education, and my Westernised, liberal upbringing. Also, given that I was brought up in a strongly female - influenced household by a mother who had an M.A. degree, my perception of myself as a woman and of other women is necessarily different from the way most Indian women see themselves. Also in my life I have not been forced to blindly accept or make ridiculous choices, e.g. having an arranged marriage, being a practicing Hindu and so on. So many of the battles that young Asian women in this country are waging against patriarchal values are stages that I did not have to go through, and I was pretty much left to decide things for myself....

A: So what are you saying is that there is a gulf between you and English women, and almost as great a gulf between yourself and Asian women....

S: yes.. And I am very angry about this, and the realisation of my feelings of alienation from India women was speeded up when I came to England, as then it was even more apparent to me just how much my identity has been shaped by the inheritance of British Imperialism and how I felt robbed of my 'Indianness'. I feel have been 'whitewashed' all my life.

A: I suppose roots aren't something I think about a lot - but when you know about them you don't bother, you just take them for granted..

S: Yes, I feel I have been thinking about it much more recently, and feeling very confused in the process. I feel I need to hang on to some definite racial identity, and at other times I wonder why it is so important for me to do this.. I know I feel rootless.

A: Do you think that's why women in the WLM treat you as 'one of us' - you are so fluent in English, it's obviously your first language, and you give the impression of being very confident and at ease in a British cultural setting - and a British political movement..

S: Yes. Again, I have only recently been realising the depth of my anger about this, and about my own role in perpetuating this, as I have allowed white women to get away with ignoring my very significant past experience as a woman from a particular class from India. Perhaps it is the embarrassment that they might feel, perhaps it's fear - I couldn't care less what liberal excuse is used...what has happened in effect, is that there are large painful sections of my life that I have suppressed, chosen to forget, as they have not been inquired about. In the process, a lot of my anger was being denied. I know I have a lot to say, a lot of knowledge to share and a lot of different experiences of oppression, and I am going to stop being treated like one of you, and reclaim and assert my differences. This process that I have suffered seems to indicate very clearly the extent to which the British WLM is so insular and national chauvinist - you had all better do something about it, and learn about what women have to go through in under-developed colonised/ex-colonised countries, where we get back to basics of survival. When I return to India later this year, the priorities as regards women's needs will be totally different. Feminism as practiced here, feminist theory, ideology will be rendered inconceivable mostly, and priorities will be food, housing, money - things you take for granted here, which you can do because those are the benefits you have received from most of the world, it's resources and people being ripped off.

A: So some of the campaigns here look like the icing on the cake to you, when there isn't even a cake in India - my feeling is that a lot of British women are really conscious of this ignorance about everything outside the Western world - and because we too had the British colonial version of Indian history, we feel so ignorant of everything about it - the scale, the culture etc - and we either have to ask no questions or risk sounding ignorant and naive.

S: Well, I think that the fear of being exposed as being ignorant really should not stop women from finding out, from asking questions. If you don't, your political arena is always going to be limited and insular. And there are things that women here can do, like being there to support Asian women, Third World women in political struggles; like making space, resources and money available to women so that they/we can say and do certain things to make ourselves heard, to fight etc. But I leave that to you to work out... Read Amrit Wilson's book 'Finding a Voice' as that should go some way to 'enlightening' you, and making clear the strength of cultural orthodoxy, repressive patriarchal traditions, values etc that more or less strangle Asian women living in this country and in their countries of origin.

A: What did you think about the BBC2 Grassroots programme about arranged marriages?

S: I was excited about it - it at least showed women beginning to break away from servicing men, and existing to produce and service men in the future - fathers, brothers, sons, fathers-in-law, uncles and so on, Again I couldn't relate in any direct personal way to the conflicts and struggles going on, although I know exactly what they meant and what they are up against. It is important to understand that I am unusual and atypical: I have always had a strong sense of my 'value' as a woman, and have fought and am still fighting to gain control of my life. Most Asian women have been denied this sense of self-worth, and have been made to accept their lives and the pain in a fatalistic way - looking forward to a better life when reincarnated - a very affected tool created and used by men, by a very patriarchal religious system, to keep women from rebelling.

A: Does this mean that whereas Asian women coming here experience racism as a new thing, they are so used to being oppressed as women that they almost don't notice it?

S: Yes, women are oppressed and abused by male supremacy, the power men have over us, all over the world.. And in order to recognise the ways in which we have been colonised,

women have been using the weapon of consciousness-raising so that we can be put in touch with our oppression and understand what has happened to us so that we are better equipped to wage a war. However, being Indian/Pakistani/Malaysian and coming to Britain means exposing yourself to yet another form of attack, racist attacks, that you have not been used to in your country of origin. And this makes you conscious of another enemy - whites....

A: So you're in a sort of bind - feeling whitewashed and robbed of your identity, but being perceived as 'black' in some situations...

S: Being called 'black' makes me very angry, whether it's a term of abuse used by a racist, or a political description used by anti-racist whites. It's as if on the one hand my colour is not recognised and I am made to pass myself off as white, or on the other, I am once again defined by white people who choose to call me black, i.e. anything that isn't white. I am brown, and I will not allow my racial identity to be hidden or confused.

A: But you are still in the paradox of receiving some of the 'benefits' of being an 'honorary white'....

S: Yes, I do feel privileged in a way,,, I am here in England, relatively comfortable both economically and in terms of what you would call basic necessities and I would see as privileges, e.g. a room of my own, being able to go to the corner shop and buy Indian produced rice which is rationed to us at home, and endless other things. This is one of the richest countries in the world, and although my position in this society is one of being very oppressed, I am still living a more comfortable life here than I did or will do in India. This makes me feel privileged. But I want to talk about the privileges of white women - how conscious are all of you about the privileges you have gained? Although white women had no active part of play in British colonialism you have all benefited from it materially, while millions of women are dying elsewhere.. And I don't mean to guilt trip you, I am demanding that you recognise your privileges and work out ways of giving them up when they oppress other sisters, or sharing them....

A: Do you think Spare Rib seems to be good about featuring women's lives in other countries?

S: Moderately... I appreciate that at least they are making moves to find out and pass on information. But I'm not sure how it is received and what impact it has.. maybe readers see it as an interesting feature.. For me, I think it is important to learn about the differences between women - class, racial differences as this teaches us more about our oppressors. Male supremacy is in fact well organised, complex and takes very many different forms, and it is vital that we recognise this complexity and not just understand our oppression at the hands of men, but also out oppressors and how they organise, ranging from different patriarchal institutions, governments etc as this would determine the way we, women, organise to overthrow them.

A: One thing that really interests me is the fact that so many black and brown women say that the struggle against racism takes priority over the struggle against sexism

S: Well, I have tried to explain what I think are the reasons for this already. Racism is often a new experience, whereas when you are used to being put down as women it needs a bit more to find out what is going on and define it as something we must fight. I want women here to be aware of the sheer damage that British imperialist culture has done to so many countries and the divisions it has created between the indigenous people, the alienation that has resulted because, for example, I can speak English more fluently than any Indian

language (because the Indian education system uses English as the medium of instruction) and that cuts me off from communicating with masses of Indian women...

A: But you'd have problems with the fact that there are so many languages in India....

S: Although I speak one Indian language fluently, and can speak two others, I would not be able to use either of these when talking to a woman from South India.. For a long time there has been a 'language problem' in which Hindi, which is supposed to be the national language, is not recognised as being such, and often English replaces it or goes alongside it in newspapers, official documents, road signs. I don't know what is going to be done about it, or what should be done.. It frightens me to think about Indian politics and India itself - so vast, so divided by sex, caste, class, community, religions, states, languages.. And all the political maneuvering which is so corrupt.

A: How do you see your own future?

S: I'm going back to India later this year - I want to share the political experience I have gained here. Revolutionary politics in India are practised on a fairly underground basis, so I will have to be fairly careful. But I have heard that there is the beginning of an organised feminist movement starting up in Bombay, and women are beginning to fight back against violence, rape around workplace issues, health care...

A: How is the Black and Brown W.L.Newsletter, which you're involved with here, going?

S: Very slowly, which is what we expected really - but you'll see it soon

A: What I'd really like to know is how did you come to be one of the few black and brown women in Britain who see the feminist struggle as being just as important as the struggle against racism and imperialism, as linked inseparably in fact?

S: Difficult.. My first involvement with politics was learning about feminism via books that friends from the US and Britain sent me years ago: Sexual politics, The First Sex, Female Eunuch etc, and then a bit later learning about Maoism.. (though I'm not a Maoist) and this process got very speeded up when I came here as literature is accessible, political meetings can happen openly etc., and there is a better chance of meeting like-minded people and being active. Also, I suppose I have always rebelled against my situation, always wanted to make my life as a woman positive, always wanted to be free.

S: writes: Having read and amended/alterd this interview, I remain very conscious of the things I have left out, the contradictions I experience etc. I think what I have done is provide some basic facts about my life and the resulting feelings I experience, in a fairly restrained way. I have not really wanted to go into political theorising as I cannot do this in isolation and it is a daunting prospect.

A Comment: I feel this interview is only just starting at the end - it opens so many new areas of looking at our oppression and the forms it takes throughout the world. I particularly want to go into the situation of Asian women in the light of our thoughts on reproduction (reproduction being needed by Asian men but feared by the colonialists, etc) - and I want to work out ways of taking up Shaila's challenge....

I wanted to say a lot more but we ran out of space!

If anyone wants to contact S. you can do so through Scarlet Women - similarly if you are interested in knowing more about the Black/Brown W.L.Newsletter.

Review: *Women and the National Front*
Veronica Ware: Searchlight Pamphlet: 30p

This is an excellent pamphlet which sets out to give basic information about the National Front's policies on women, and the role of women within the NF and other fascist organisations.

Unlike their 'line' on race, the NF's policy on women is not spelt out exactly in any one place, and this pamphlet has pieced together their views on birth control, equal pay for men & women, women outside the home, women as mothers, and selective breeding.

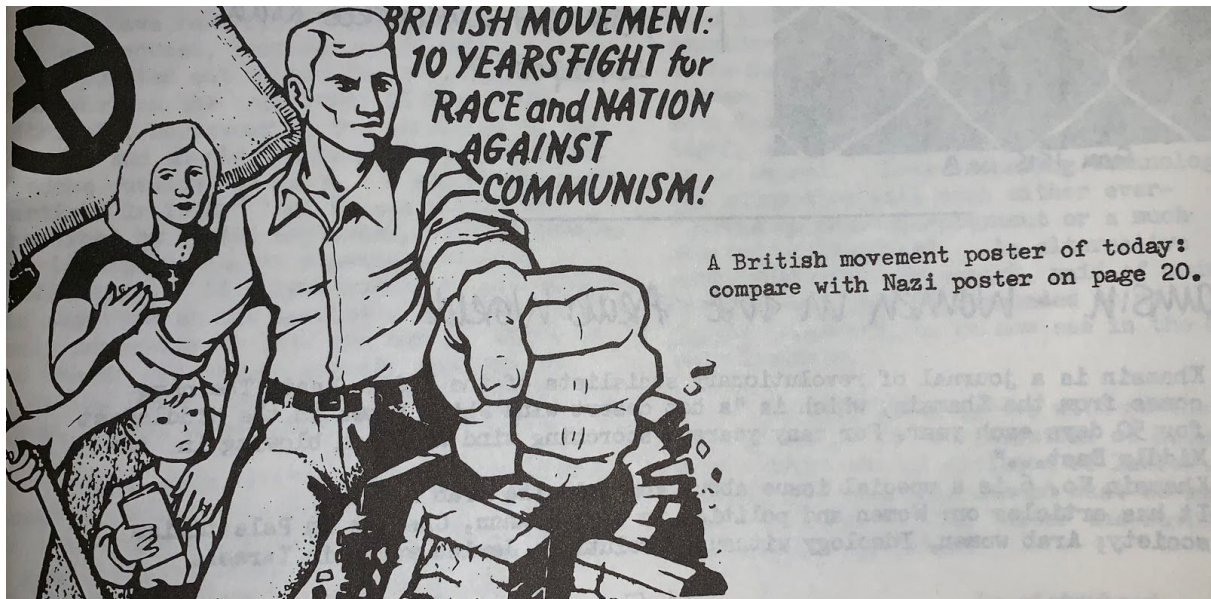
The NF is opposed to abortion rights for White women, but is in favour of abortion and sterilisation for black and Asian women. Although the NF believe that a woman's place is in the home, submissive to her man, 6 women candidates were put forward in the 1974 general elections, because they wanted to field the largest possible number of candidates. However there are few women in any senior posts in the NF or in the British Movement, which is an openly fascist movement modelled closely on the Nazi Party.

The main argument used to appeal to women voters is the threat of 'black muggers' - stories are exaggerated and white crime is never reported, so creating a picture of a terrifying increase in crime directed against white women. The solution put forward is to 'stop immigration - start repatriation.'

'This pamphlet does not intend merely to warn women that would happen to them if the NF or any other fascist organisation were in power. It is crucial to see that the extreme right are using existing prejudices and divisions in society to turn people against each other, at a time when employment, cuts in housing, social services and rising prices are more threatening than ever.

Class, race and sex are the main divisions of this society, and they need to be understood and fought against just as much as the fascist organisations, which use them for their own advancement.'

Fiona Forsyth



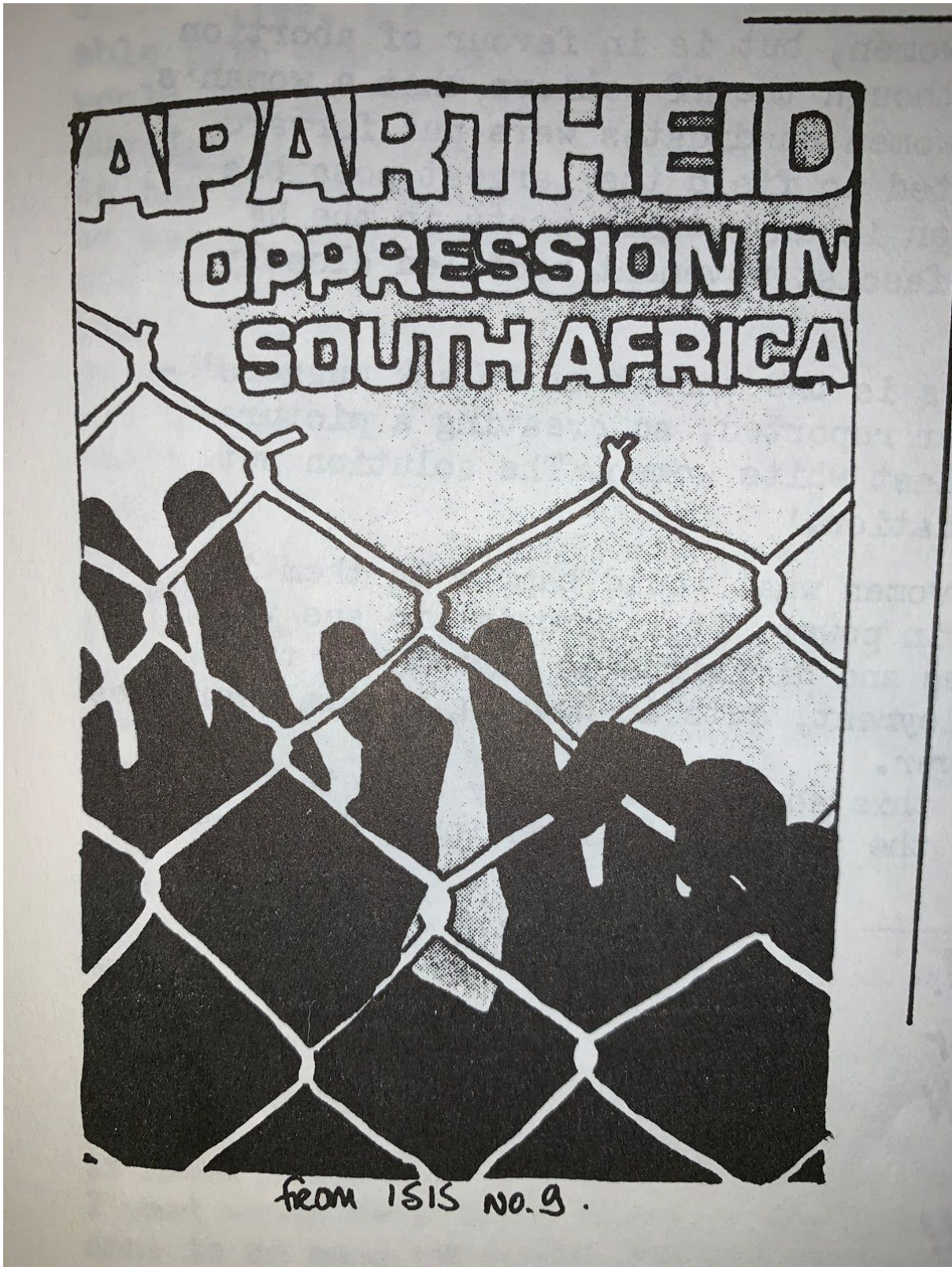
Isis - International Bulletin

No 9 - 'Women in Southern Africa' contains lots of basic information about the oppression and struggles of women in Southern Africa.

There are articles on African women under Apartheid; on Oppression and Liberation; Rural women; pass Laws; the Gold Widows; SWAPO Women's campaign; on the Soweto Uprising; Multinationals; Resources on Southern Africa; and information about African publications, and groups and writers in Africa and working in solidarity and elsewhere.

No 10 - 'Women and Work' has articles on Women workers in Asia; South Korea; Textile Workers fight for their rights; Denmark- supporting women on strike; One boss - one struggle, electronics in S.E Asia; USA - organising at J.P Stevens. Filipina domestic workers in Italy; Latin America: Mujer y Trabajo.

ISIS is available from: [address]



The Big Flame Pamphlet on Fascism

Published last autumn contains a number of articles on different aspects of racism as experiences by blacks and Asians, and the way in which they are organising against it. It also contains an article on women and fascism. Recommended reading

Khamsin - Women in the Arab World

Khamsin is a journal of revolutionary socialists in the Middle East. The name comes from the Khamsnin, which is "a hot desert wind which blows in the Middle East for 50 days each year. For many years scorching wind has been blowing in the Middle East..."

Khamsin No.6 is a special issue about Women in the Arab world. It has articles on: Women and politics in the Lebanon, changes in Palentinian society; Arab women, Ideology without revolution: Jewish women in Israel. £1.50 from Bookshops of Pluto Press

Letter

Dear Scarlet Women,

I would like to reply to some of the points raised in Scarlet Women 9 on the socialisation of housework.

The north London Group are worried because we might be asking for a "huge army of servants" who would not be treated with respect because they were doing cleaning work. My answer is that we already have "armies" of public servants doing cleaning work - dustmen, street-cleaners, sewerment - and there already are people who think themselves above this honest, essential work and would not soil their hands. Should we not treat these snobs with contempt? Mao's idea of sending such people to do a stint on the land was a good one. This job-sharing should last as long as socialism lasts.

The "army" of cleaners which we already have is not provided free by the state. It is paid for by each householder is fair, according to income, is questionable, Rates and taxes are not fairly graded, and the distribution of income is unfair, anyway. But these are different problems.

The men who cleanse the streets and towns differ from the women who cleanse the houses in having the sense to demand wages for their labour.

I have read Ellen Malos' pamphlet, and, at her request, sent her my comments. I have pointed out to her that we seem to differ somewhat on the definition of housework. Strictly, housework is the servicing of the house, and should not include work that can be done outside the home. I suggested in my article in Isis 5 that houses should be serviced by public employees, male or female, periodically, as one expects a rubbish collection. If a homeowner is not wanted in any room at the appointed time, it is only necessary to lock the door. There is no reason why people already employed in cleaning should be transferred to other work, unless it would be more suitable.

Other methods of providing houseworkers, however, would also be necessary, at least in the transitional period. For example, I read in an article from the GDR, which claims to have

made great strides in the 'socialisation of housework' (taken to mean childcare and communal meals):-

"If you go into any school staffroom early, you will find two or three men enjoying a quiet smoke, The women teachers come rushing in at the last moment for they have first of all to get their own children up and dressed, get breakfast, deliver children to creches or kindergartens, and then hurry to the school and into the classroom to begin teaching without a minute to spare."

Not very good either for the women or for their work. For such cases, the provision by the state of a professional housekeeper, on the Vietnamese plan, is probably the best answer. This state-employed housekeeper could already be a member of the household (husband, wife or other resident adult) who may be a capable housekeeper, good with children. No woman with young children should, in my opinion, be forced to go out to work as the only way to be financially independent of a man, or for any other reason. She should be kept by the state. But if her work outside the home is more valuable socially and more congenial to her than her work inside, then the state should relieve her of the home shift.

I cannot for the life of me see why, when jobs are shared, housework should be considered the only one not on any account to be paid, as long as we have a wages system. Eventually, all socially necessary work (except, possibly, the exceptionally highly skilled and specialised) will have to be shared. Ever-advancing technology and automation will mean either ever increasing mass unemployment or a much shorter working week. As alternative work, what about housework, paid of course? Most men will not be persuaded to do unpaid housework, as we now see in the GDR and elsewhere.

I am glad Ellen agrees with me that we must demand the socialisation of housework without sexual division of labour. I would add that this demand must be made now. To leave it till 'after the revolution' would be fatal.

In Sisterhood,
Kathleen Jones

Symbolic Letters

Dear Scarlet Women,

You ask for comments on the proposed symbol for Socialist Feminism. I think that such a symbol is totally unnecessary. The present symbol of the WLM is perfectly adequate. It incorporates the clenched fist of Socialism with the women's symbol. What more do we need?

The idea that we need a separate symbol from the rest of the WLM suggests that we are no part of it or that we want to distinguish ourselves from other women in the WLM. Just because some women do not call themselves socialist feminists it does not mean that they are not socialists. A woman I know who calls herself a radical feminist said to me that she

resented that just because she called herself a radical feminists, socialist feminists assumed that she had never had a 'socialist' thought in her life. To have a separate symbol for socialist feminism suggests that we are the only or the 'true' socialists in the WLM. This is totally untrue.

As for the suggested symbol, I presume that the two sickles come from the hammer and sickle on the Russian flag. I hope that Soviet 'Socialism' is not socialism to which socialist feminists aspire so we should avoid any symbol that could associate us with it.

In Sisterhood,
Alison Tilley

We were looking for a symbol for Scarlet Women and not for the socialist feminist current

Dear sisters,

I'm afraid I wasn't totally in favour of the proposed design/logo for Scarlet Women on the back of issue no.8 and so (with some sisterly assistance) had the idea of this. Hope you like it.

Love and sisterhood,
Liz

Dear sisters,

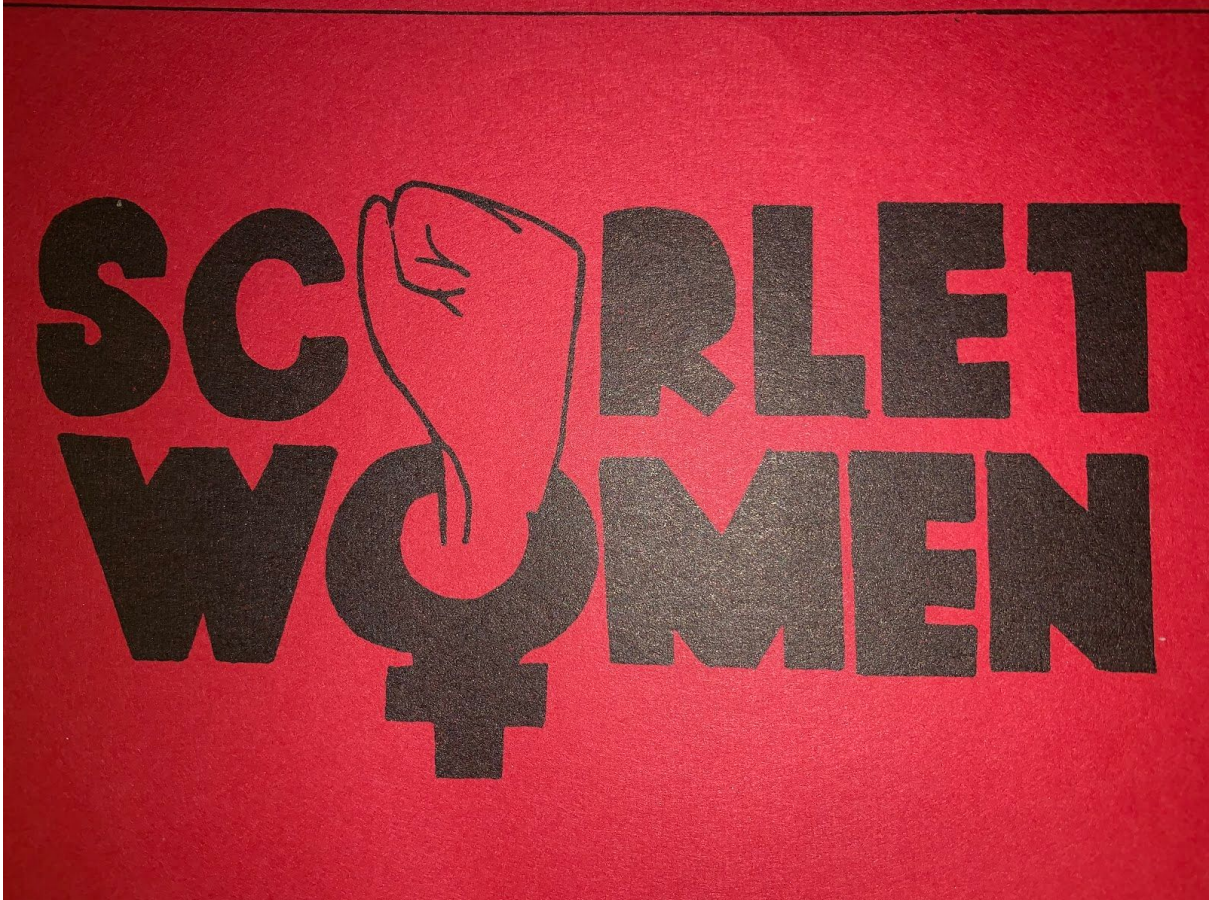
I enclose a rough design for a Scarlet Women 'logo'. It is really in response to the socialist feminist symbol you published in Scarlet Women 8, which I personally didn't care for.

I don't like the idea of socialist feminism having its own symbol - we are part of the women's movement not separate from it. However I do think Scarlet Women as a magazine/newsletter should have an identifiable logo which could be used on the cover of issues, posters, etc.

In sisterhood,
Penny Beckett

Could we have some comments please about the symbols - opposite and on the back page?

We've had an article from Maria Black about Reproduction and we apologise for not having space this time: we'll be printing it in SW10



liberation without socialist women's revolution
no socialist revolution without women's liberation
socialist revolution without women's liberation



Designed by [illegible]