

THE NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO THE WOMEN QUESTION

The position of woman in contemporary society and the history of the female sex indicate forms of solution that have much profounder origins and frameworks than those traditionally accepted. The need to demystify and decodify all (apparently natural) forms of the social determination of the human sexes, their characteristics and functions in the social order is necessarily linked to the demystification of the totality of social life. To penetrate to the core of human sexual nature means simultaneously to grasp the core of human sociality. The history of alienation is also the history of the social separation of the sexes - the creation of opposite human male/female identities as the basis of their inequality. The first step towards a revolutionary transformation of the position of women is grasping of the sense and reason of the alienation of the sexes its socio-historical, psychological roots. Human history since the gentile social order has had a visible tendency, that of the exploitation of women. "Ideological systems" were created alongside; their function being to justify the inequality by the supposedly existing inferiority of woman in all human and social fields.

The social mechanisms of the separation and inequality of the sexes and the practice of the subjugation of women followed by this false consciousness determined for centuries the position, traits and possibilities of the female sex. Woman lived through her history reduced to only one activity (biological and socializing reproduction) and to one limited social space (the private domain of the family). The institution of marriage and family became the exact reflection of the alienated social relation between the sexes representing thus the only and "natural" vocation, veiling all forms of her factual impotence ~~that~~ ^{and} is hindering all other possibilities. The "primal" identity of women is the result of the social process that determines human sex traits.

Events in present day industrial capitalism tend to indicate the untenability of the traditional patriarchal order and the social inequality of the sexes, whilst the new process of women raising their self-consciousness, more radical than ever, inside the heterogeneous woman's movement indicates the necessity of a theoretical and practical effort in the transformation of the position of women. The analysis of the causes of the inequality of women and of the mechanisms of social determination of the human sexes in the form of a "natural" division of labour has been a neglected and unexamined. Women's revolt sporadically followed human history becoming today an indivisible part of every project of socialist revolution. Meanwhile, in the socialist societies, even though many things have been achieved there is a whole series of open questions concerning the position of women, the family, marriage, social relations between the sexes and their still present inequality. The family, women and everything concerning the relation between sexes is still under the pressure of bourgeois morality, patriarchal tradition, religion and various social taboos and (new and old) habits. Such a traditional consciousness represents an anachronism and is not in accord with the ^{progressive} tendencies of self-managing society.

This thematic conference should give an answer to the question: what is happening to women and to the relation between sexes in bourgeois society today and what are the origins, social, political and psychological of her inequality.

- what has changed in the social position of women after the rise of the women's movement and what have been the achievements, problems and possible blind alleys of the women's movement in the West?

- what are the theoretical results of the feminist analysis of the position of women - in the critique of value systems, of sex determination, in the analysis of everyday life, of sexism, in debates over the character of socio-economic theories that neglect the family as a key element in

the mechanism of social reproduction, in the critique of psychoanalytical theory, etc?

- what are the practical, social and individual elements of the new ~~consciousness~~ ^{feminist} consciousness, what does the new private/public behaviour consist in and what are its characteristics?

It is also indispensable to ask what happened to woman and what are the changes achieved in the relation between the sexes after the victory of the socialist revolutions. What is the real position of women in socialism, what are achievements in emancipation and what are the problems that are still unsolved? Does the existing emancipation of women lead to her actual liberation when we know that she still goes on about her traditional family duties and that she is not present there where the decisions are being taken? What are the specificities of her situation? To what extent are the patriarchal mentality and the traditional relation between the sexes still present? What are the possible ways for the consciousness raising and action of women in the transformation of their role? Did the level of emancipation existing up till now actually touch upon the traditional structure of the family? Is the question of the humanisation of the relations between the sexes present in our midst?² What is the way in which the human being of the female sex is formed in our midst, and in what framework does she see her realisation? Why are there few attempts at alternative forms of life among the younger generations in our country?

The meeting will be divided into two parts:

- the yugoslav meeting: 24 - 26 october
- international meeting: 27 - 29 october

THE YUGOSLAV MEETING

The guiding themes of the yugoslav meeting have not been definitely determined but they will refer to the

concrete analysis of the position of women in Yugoslavia as well as to the general themes given for the international meeting.

List of participants from Yugoslavia:

Nadežda Čačinović-Puhovski (Zagreb)
Slavenka Drakulić-Ilić (Zagreb)
Lydia Sklevicki (Zagreb)
Nada Ler-Sofronić (Sarajevo)
Andjelka Milić (Beograd)
Ruža First-Dilić (Zagreb)
Gordana Bosanac (Zagreb)
Gordana Cerjan-Letica (Zagreb)
Jelena Zuppa (Zagreb)
Vesna Pusić (Zagreb)
Dragan Klaić (Beograd)
Borka Pavićević (Beograd)
Karel Turza
Stevan Nikšić (Beograd)
Helene Despić-Popović (Beograd)
Vesna Dramušić (Beograd)
Silva Mežnarić (Ljubljana)
Zoran Vidaković (Sarajevo)
Mira Oklobdžija (Rijeka)
Slobodan Drakulić (Rijeka)
Jovan Djordjević (Beograd)
Živana Olbina (Beograd)
Editors of the women's magazine "Žena" (Zagreb)
Jasmina Tešanović (Beograd)
Dunja Blažević (Beograd)
Žarana Papić (Beograd)
Rada Iveković (Rim)
Ljuba Stojić (Beograd)
Perka Vitorović (Beograd)...

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING

Guiding themes:

1. Women-capitalism-revolution: the analysis of the social position of women in capitalism, the various strategies for the transformation of the private/public relationship between the sexes, the family as part of the capitalist production system, the importance of linking private and public, the critique of bourgeois society and the project of a new society, the critique of politics, patriarchy - origin of male domination?

2. Today's women's movement, forms of organising, types of activity, specificities in particular countries, problems, achievements, dilemmas, importance.
3. Psychoanalysis-sexuality-woman's identity: the place of psychoanalysis in bourgeois society, the critique of psychoanalysis and the new questioning of its importance, the interpretation of woman's sexuality, the social formation of Eros, the problem of socially imposed heterosexuality, etc.
4. Woman and culture: The origins of the absence of women in science, philosophy, art, the forms of traditional women's activities that are not comprised in "high" culture, the analysis of language and of the conceptual apparatus of philosophy and science, negative stereotypes, systems of thought that justify woman's subordination. What are the ways for women to enter the domain of culture, what language should she use, should she insist on her own specific "woman's" sensibility? Is this sensibility a lasting characteristic or is it the result of historical determination? The politicization of culture and the problem of neglecting the language of modern art (the relation between content and language).

List of invited participants:

United Kingdom

Juliet Mitchell
Sheila Rowbotham
Diana Leonard Barker
Helen Roberts
Jill Lewis
Ann Oakley
Branka Magash
Sarah Kent

USA

Susan Sontag
Lucy Lippard

France

Simone de Beauvoir
Luce Irigaray
Christine Delphy
Francoise Pasquier
Alline Dallier
Naty Garcia
Xavière Gauthier
Julia Kristeva
Catherine Millet
Nil Yalter
Catherine Nadaud

Italy

Ane Marie Boetti
 Chiara Saraceno
 Manuela Fraire
 Dacia Maraini
 Elisabetta Rasy
 Dario Fo/Franka Rame
 M.A. Macciocchi

Francoise Collin (Belgium)
 Ewa Morawska (Poland)
 Judit Kele (Hungary)
 Alice Schwarzer (West Germany)

FORMS OF WORKDISCUSSIONS

- A series of discussions on the proposed themes
- round tables, polemic meetings where authoresses (and authors) of various viewpoints (radical feminism, marxists, sociologists, psychoanalysts) would introduce those present into the existing dilemmas, theoretical conceptions, and would thus among other make possible a dialogue with the marxist point of view.

EXHIBITIONS

- statistical facts (on the situation of women in Yugoslavia)
- newspaper cuttings "Sexism around us"
- photographs (contributions to a history of women - family photos, a series of photos taken in the streets of Belgrade)
- an exhibition of posters

FILMS

- 4 series of films - Women as a sexual symbol on the screen
 - Women directors
 - Films whose theme is the position of women
 - feminist, political non-commercial films.

We kindly ask the participants to send us or bring with themselves all material that they would like to present (books, periodicals, films, posters...)