

# SPANISH COMMUNISTS AND THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN

The impact of the movement for the liberation of women was discussed in a meeting of West European Communist Parties held in Rome recently. This extract from a contribution of the Communist Party of Spain, concerns the ideological struggle in the labor movement on this question. The earlier part of the speech dealt with concrete experiences of struggle.

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There are times when we are forced into the realisation that we are held back by old conceptions and habits, but these setbacks only help to make us more aware of the problems of women in our society. With the thrust of the struggle and its most immediate claims we must include the more general prospects of the fight on the part of women for complete equality. A movement exists today, but without doubt it will be larger tomorrow when in democratic conditions it will be easier to broaden the consciousness of women to finally put an end to the discrimination they have suffered, often camouflaged by

the myths of the supposed "quality" of women.

With regard to the ideological debate necessary to solve these problems, the Communist Party of Spain has confronted it openly and boldly, and without fear of recognising and denouncing the aspects which, between ourselves, must be modified.

At our last Congress, the Secretary General of our Party, Santiago Carrillo, declared in a document of the Central Committee, approved by the Congress - "If we Communists must turn 180 degrees to accomplish a goal, I believe it is in respect to the attitude to women for even amongst the most generous, advanced and dedicated comrades, a reactionary attitude is often encountered. We must call this by its real name. It is against women and their actual role in life and society." Why a turn of 180 degrees? It is because the possibility for an improved status for women is limited not only by the obstacles of capitalism, which oppose all improvement, but by a whole series of obstacles and discriminations. These find

expression both in respect to women at work and at home, within the family. They are reinforced by a long, very long, tradition. This exploitation has roots that are pre-capitalist, but have been used to the depths by capitalism for the super-exploitation of women in the most scandalous way.

On the ideological plane the oppression of women stems from education and childhood. A woman is conditioned from when she is a baby to accept an inferior role. The most brutal discrimination, seen through marxist eyes, is the series of ideas that legitimise the "double morality" in the usual way, that man is the superior being.

We examine this problem with an open debate in the party and with the masses, not because we are under the illusion that the problems will be resolved simply by discussing them. On the contrary. We know very well that in Spain our ideas have a small audience. No words are spoken of the emancipation of women either for individuals or groups. We must therefore give an answer which is both revolutionary and truthful, an answer which the young understand, in either words a communist answer.

We confront this matter because it is politically necessary for us in the struggle for democracy today and tomorrow to consolidate that democracy, to uplift women both socially and politically in the advance towards socialism. Women constitute half our population, half of humanity.

In the present economic crisis, and not only the economic one, all resulting from capitalism, it becomes increasingly necessary to mobilise the immense female masses. In Spain today our main object is the struggle against the cost of living. This is the centre of our struggle towards a national strike, and together with the alternative political path fixed by the Democratic Council, we shall go forward and finish forever the putrid fascist dictatorship. It is clear however that to conquer the problem of the female masses

for democracy and progress, it is necessary that the Party shall be more and more avant-garde.

In the ideological debate and going deeper into the debate, we should look at a few of the general lines outlined by Marx and Engels which, for certain historical reasons, we have not always sufficiently taken into account. We are in a period when there is a major growth in the strength of the party. Even though it is known that we are not legal, working people and students come to us in large numbers and an important point is that many of these people are women. We consider that in strengthening the party, we must reflect in our committees and responsible positions, a far greater number of women. We have obtained some results, for example, in the Young Communists and student organisations, the percentage of women is high and in some instances higher than that of men. But then, when a woman marries, it becomes difficult for her to be in a position of leadership. Sometimes a communist husband constitutes the obstacle. We must overcome these difficulties for we are the party of liberation of the working classes and all humanity. We must never forget, therefore, that we must also be the party of the liberation of women.

In the past all dominant classes have accepted and aggravated the inferior position of women. The workers and communists say - No More!

One of the dimensions of our historical and revolutionary role is to achieve the complete equality of woman with man. We know that this will require a great effort and a long time, but maybe it will be less than we now believe when we consider the atmosphere in vast sectors of the progressive and revolutionary young people. Compared with the traditional image of woman, the slave of folklore and the object of publicity for the monopolies, we wish to present the image of the new woman; the woman of tomorrow; the woman totally equal with man in both social and political life, in sexual relations, in culture, and in the arts. This equality will give a superior quality to all human relations in the society liberated from capitalist exploitation.