

REPORT TO GROUPS OF WOMEN IN INDIA AND BILAN MAY 1971

The general political situation in Britain.

- a) The struggles of the working class in Britain in the fifties and sixties were able to cause a stagnation in the development of capital in Britain.
- b) These struggles were carried out by workers on the shop floor through the shop stewards movement, a system of representation on the shop floor by union delegates.
- c) At the same time planned underdevelopment in the West Indies and the sub-continent brought thousands of black immigrants to Britain to fill labour shortages at least in some measure caused by the militancy of the native working class on the shop floor.
- d) The move of Britain into the EEC is part of the move to disinvest British capital now in Britain, to more closely represent British capital already invested in the Continent & in areas of lower levels of class struggle - where profits are可观. Also to bring trade unions more closely into line with the kind of participation characteristic for example in Germany.
- e) The local side of this attack are two Bills now before Parliament: the Industrial Relations Bill to strengthen the unions and destroy the shop floor organisation; and the Aliens Bill to give the State the right to deport the most vulnerable and potentially the most militant section of that class, black workers. With the unemployment caused by disinvestment and increasing inflation they hope finally to discipline the working class in Britain.
- f) In the same way that the Industrial Relations Bill is a tribute to the militancy of the working class as a whole, the Aliens Act is a tribute to black workers who have not allowed themselves to be used to destroy the shop floor organisations and the general unity of the class, despite extreme attempts by the ruling class, officially (legislation to prevent racism) and unofficially (Pacellian, etc.)
- g) In the same way, however, as capitalist development stagnated as a result of militant shop floor struggles, the organisation of the working class also stagnated, and while the shop stewards movement was able to wage a defensive struggle, it is incapable of dealing with the present concerted attack of capital both inside and outside of Britain.

The necessity for a new level of organisation, and key sections of the class.

(At this point a translation was read of the leaflet of the Notting Hill group, Women's Liberation, on December 8: "Women against the Castle-Carr Conspiracy.")

- a) The three groups who are pivotal to the development of a new level of organisation are Blacks, women and youth.
- b) Blacks: a report of the conference held in London May 22-23, the most important working class event for many years in Britain. Dealt with education as integral to the capitalist division of labour, youth who clashed directly with the State where there was no mediation such as exists in factories and offices (the trade unions), the relationship between the revolution in the Third World and in the metropolis, the unity of all immigrant workers in Europe, self-defence as the first step to the introduction into the struggle in Britain for the first time the



question of armed struggle, and black women, the oppressed of the oppressed. The limiting of the struggle to the shop floor was impossible where blacks were concerned, and their struggle posed the unification of the revolt in the schools and in the streets with the revolt at the point of production.

c) Women The leaflet previously read shows that the movement of millions of women is, again, not only in production since even women who work outside the home have not an eight-hour but a 24-hour work day. Thus they cannot be confined to the narrow defensive trade union struggle or the narrow defensive trade union demand. In addition, the other side of wages, that is, the cost of living, was an issue which working class housewives in particular were confronted with, and the wages battle will be lost without their active participation. The inflation has put them in a position where they must go out to work or stay at work precisely at a time of rising unemployment. Black women in particular have always worked out of their homes, and they more than any women in Eastern Europe have achieved "equality" - that is, equal exploitation with men in production. The fruits of this special exploitation will be seen in the leading role they will be playing in the struggle in the next period.

d) Youth-net merely the students, have shown that they no longer wish to be part of the educational system or to "graduate" to the assembly line. The rejection of school work, office work and factory work is most clearly shown among them, both black and white. The black children in particular refuse to be indoctrinated by the educational system and the ESW schools and classes in Britain are a response to growing rebellion among them.

These in general are the forces which can transcend the impasse the working class in Britain now faces. The trade unions are not only an integral part of the State apparatus but can only play this role against the working class because that class has been unable to break the hold which history - their history in Britain and the history of oppressed classes outside of Britain, i.e. imperialism - has forged.

#### The primary lessons of the British women's movement.

a) It may be useful to you who are beginning to know what some of us in Britain feel has been the greatest barrier to the formation of a movement in Britain which can play the role that the political situation demands, that is, that can lead to the genuine liberation of women. This barrier has been the role of the so-called political women within the movement.

b) They felt the GL movement was an arena for recruitment, and so it was not necessary to build the movement but merely to put over "political line."

c) They felt its purpose was to "raise the political level of women", not realising that it was the low level of politics of men which had caused a women's movement to form.

d) They felt the working class was white, male and over 30, and therefore they could not only conceive a women's movement to be an adjunct, an appendage to "the working class" which continued to be in their view, male.



e) They felt the struggle was only in production, which was the view that the Left had held not only in relation to women but to the whole of the Third World. They could not see that capital's control and organization of production in the factory and office could only continue because of capital's control and organization of production in the home.

f) They felt the so-called working class issue was the "aidor" issue. That is, they limited the struggle to the trade union issue, and did not understand that women posing the liberation of women was widened the scope of the struggle and destroyed the hold the unions had on the working class, that the definition of men as units of production, without sexual lives, with relations with the generations, housing and education, was precisely the definition by capital of that class.

g) They refused to examine their own position as women in the organizations of which they were members, and therefore refused to understand not only that liberation begins at home, but first unless they did this, they were acting as agents of men within the movement.

The difference between a movement and an organization.

a) Unlike an organization, a movement must express a wide spectrum of views and perspectives.

b) The most important example of this are the political lesbians in the United States, a small wing of the movement which has decided to end all sexual relations with men. Their reason is not that they are more sexually attracted to women, but that they refuse any longer to make the compromise which any relationship with men, which is after all always a power relationship, demands. This may not be what most of the women in the movement want to do, but the very existence of these women is a reminder to the whole movement that for women no compromise is possible with this society.

c) Whatever work this group or others attempt to do in the context of politics in Italy, the most important political weapon is that we respect and protect all sections of the movement from those who attack it. When the attack comes from the so-called left, we must remind them that they had nothing to say for 100 years, and that when the auto first speaks, it is not their business to tell her what to say.

d) This will be an expression of our respect for each other, and this in turn will express our respect for ourselves, something which we have never done before.

The above report was predicated on the circulation of Forlana's document which laid, very briefly, the theoretical basis for a movement of women, with which I generally agreed. The basic thesis of that document is that with the advent of capitalism the unit of production became the factory, as against the family (the home) which it had always previously been, and that that meant the separation not only of men and women, but of parents and children, the sick and the well, the directly productive from the indirectly productive. The movement seeks to destroy these divisions and by "bring[ing] together again... all that capitalism has torn



apart." It was also made clear that from Lenin to Mao to Castro the liberation of women was posed as the entry of women into social production, that is, into the factories and offices, and <sup>as a solution</sup> utterly reject this/for what it is, the further enslavement of women.