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'Practise Marxism, and not revisionism.'—Chairman Mao

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WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION AND PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Notes for the use of Comrades

1. Proletarian Teachers on the Role of Women

Marxists always regard the emancipation of women as an important question, a component part of the proletarian struggle. The great proletarian teachers acknowledge the great contribution women have made and are making throughout history.

Marx: "Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment."

Lenin: "There can be no socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it."

Stalin: "Not a single great movement of the oppressed in the history of mankind has been able to do without the participation of working women. Working women, the most oppressed among the oppressed, never have nor could stand aside from the broad path of the liberation movement. This movement of serfs has produced, as is known, hundreds and thousands of martyrs and heroines. Tens of thousands of working women were to be found in the ranks of fighters for the liberation of the serfs. It is not surprising that millions of working women have been drawn in beneath the banners of the revolutionary movement of the working class, the most powerful of all liberation movements of the oppressed masses."

Chairman Mao: "Women comprise one half of the population. The economic status of working women and the fact of their being specially oppressed prove not only that women urgently need revolution but also that they are a decisive force in the success or failure of the revolution."

2. Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State

Under the classless society of primitive communism women occupied well-respected position, because motherhood was regarded with respect. At that time the systems of group marriage and pairing family prevailed, as such, descent and right of inheritance were through the mother only, i.e. "mother-right" prevailed.

Accumulation of wealth belonging to man led to the transfer of "mother-right" into "father-right" so that man can pass on his wealth to his definite heirs. Engels said: "Monogamy arose out of the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of one person - and that a man - and out of the desire to bequeath this wealth to this man's children and to no one else's..."

He also pointed out: "...the first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male..."

UPHOLD PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

With the accumulation of private property there arose the need for a repressive machinery, the state, to protect the property of those who acquired large amounts of wealth against those who had little. Therefore, to reverse the historic defeat of women which came about with the emergence of private property and the state, private ownership of the means of production must be replaced by social ownership (so that the economic reasons, inheritance of private property, gets wiped out), and the final elimination of bourgeoisie and ushering in of communism.

3. Revolutionary Traditions of Women

Women, the most oppressed among the oppressed, have always rebelled against oppression and exploitation since the emergence of class society. Women who are part of the oppressed people as a whole cannot win emancipation unless imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and hegemonism are overthrown by the proletariat, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat internationally. Following are outstanding landmarks in the world proletariat's history of struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

(a) Paris Commune - When the Paris Communards seized the opportunity to establish the Commune, the first proletarian state power, in 1871, tens of thousands of Parisian working women took part in that historic struggle.

The correspondent of the British Times said in horror: "If the French nation were composed of nothing but women, what a terrible nation it would be!"

Marx, on the other hand, jubilantly paid tribute to the heroism of the Parisian women Communards: "... the real Parisian women showed again at the surface -- heroic, noble, and devoted, like the women of antiquity." (i.e. like women of ancient times who used to lead battles)

One outstanding heroine of the Paris Commune was a Communist named Louis Michel, a member of the First International. Another was Elizabeth Dmitrieff. W.Z. Foster, an American revolutionary fighter, has this to say about them: "Louis Michel and Elizabeth Dmitrieff were but two noted fighters among thousands of heroines. Before the court, Michel proudly declared, "I belong entirely to the revolution and I wish to accept the responsibility for all my deeds." Convinced, she spent ten years in prison exile.

(b) Eleanor Marx Aveling - She was organizing the unskilled workers in the East End for years. The "epoch-making" occurrence of the May 4, 1890 May Day demonstration and rally are principally attributed to her revolutionary work by Engels. He said: "I hold it to be the most important and magnificent in the entire May Day celebration that on May 4, 1890, the English proletariat, rousing itself from 40 years of slumber, re-joined the movement of its class." The demonstration was to demand a legalised 8-hour working day at the suggestion of Eleanor Marx Aveling. There were 100,000 on the march and 100,000 more joined them at the rally. Engels: "while (the unskilled workers) are not yet socialists to a man, they insist nevertheless on being led only by socialists. But socialist propaganda had already been going on for years in East End, where it was above all Mrs. E. Marx Aveling and her husband, Edward Aveling, who had four years earlier discovered the best propaganda field in the 'radical clubs' consisting almost exclusively of workers, and had worked on them steadily and, as is evident now, with the best of success. ... Mrs. Aveling led almost unaided last winter's strike in Silvertown, also in East End; and on the gas workers' committee she represents a women's section she has founded there." (source: Marx and Engels: On Britain)

(c) Great October Socialist Revolution, 1917 - Lenin appraised the role of the Russian working women in the revolution and the civil war in the following words: "In Petrograd, here in Moscow, and in other cities and industrial centres, proletarian women showed up splendidly during the revolution. We would not have won without them, or hardly. That is my opinion. What courage they showed and how courageous they still are! Imagine the suffering and privation they are enduring. But they are holding out because they want to defend the Soviets, because they want freedom and communism. Yes, our working women are magnificent class

fighters. They are worthy of admiration and love."

(d) The Communist International - The Comintern led by Lenin, paid great deal of attention to organizing working women internationally. At the second congress of the Comintern a women's conference was held, and at the third congress a thesis on woman question, directed by Lenin, was presented to the women's conference. It gave the proletarian line on woman question and developed a general program for work among women internationally.

The Comintern set up International Women's Commissions in many parts of the world, with Moscow as the centre. German woman Communist Clara Zetkin led the women's work as head of the secretariat for the Commissions for 20 years.

(e) In 1935, the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism was founded. It was a united front organisation to rally people to oppose fascism.

(f) Formation of Women's International Democratic Front (W.I.D.F.) in Paris after the Second World War. With the emergence of Khrushchevite revisionism in 1956, however, this organisation degenerated.

4. More Recent History of Women's Participation in Socialist Revolution and Wars of National Liberation

New China - Role of women in socialist revolution and construction, consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Chairman Mao has said: "Times have changed, and today men and women are equal. Whatever men comrades can accomplish, women comrades can too."

Chairman has also pointed out, "Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole."

Fundamental change in the ownership of the means of production from private ownership to common ownership by the proletariat and people and the dictatorship of the proletariat lays condition for the double oppression of women in old society to be removed: i.e. 1) class exploitation and oppression of working people by moribund ruling classes removed, 2) proletarian state power through socialist culture and ideology revolutionizes people's world outlook. The "four olds" (ideas, culture, customs and habits) are criticised and repudiated and the "four news" (ideas, culture, customs and habits) are inculcated so as to remove male domination, that "men are superior to women."

Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution - tremendous revolutionization of people's thinking.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: "The proletariat can only emancipate itself by emancipating the whole of mankind."

Struggle against Lin Biao and Confucius - campaign against "men are superior to women" Confucian thinking, so as to bring into fuller play the revolutionary initiative of the women masses.

Study the theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat - with the Chinese revolution and the world revolution in mind.

Nurseries, creches, dining halls, etc. enables women to be fully participant in class struggle, struggle for production and scientific experiment. Witness the first Chinese woman of Tibetan origin Phanthog, mother of three children, as deputy leader of the expedition which climbed the highest peak in the world.

Outstanding women communists - Comrade Chiang Ching, member of the Central Committee and the Polit-buro of the Communist Party of China. She was entrusted by the Party Central Committee to launch ideological and cultural revolutionization in the People's Liberation Army first before the Cultural Revolution was officially launched. She led the cultural workers in revolutionizing traditional strongholds of the feudal-bourgeois culture, e.g. Peking opera and ballet on the

proletarian culture

basis of the guidelines of Chairman Mao that proletarian culture must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers and should help to remould them in the image of the proletariat. Some of the important works are: The Red Detachment of Women, Red Lantern, Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy, The White-Haired Girl, On the Docks.

Comrade Wu Kuo-sien has been elected as the first woman Vice-Premier in China.

Comrade Kuo Feng-lien is the Party secretary in Tachai, the model for agriculture.

Comrade Li Su-wen is a woman worker who led the Chinese delegation to the U.N. Conference on International Women's Year.

The Chinese women are glorious examples for women of the world to follow.

Heroines in National Liberation Wars

Vietnam : Nguyen Thi Dinh - Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the South Vietnam National Liberation Armed Forces.

Nguyen Thi Binh, Foreign Minister of south Vietnam.

Ta Thi Que, outstanding guerrilla fighter, winner of many awards, been to China where she was received by Chairman Mao.

Malaya : Maimun, wife of martyr, martyred herself in people's war against British colonialism. Both husband and wife were members of the Communist Party of Malaya.

India : Nirmala Krishnamurthy, wife of martyr Panchadi Krishnamurthy who was a founder member of the Communist Party of India (ML). She too laid down her life in struggle.

Palestine : Shadia Abu Ghazala, a martyr, outstanding commando fighter.

Mozambique : Josina Machel, the wife of Comrade Samora Machel, martyred.

Participated in building the women's detachments of the Frelimo armed forces.

Albania : Vito Kapo, leader of the Albanian Women's Union said: "The women of Albania have written golden pages in the history of the national liberation war. Together with the people, they laid the foundation of new Socialist Albania with the blood they shed and the sacrifices they made."

Lexhmi Hoxha, leading Communist of long standing. The Albanian women, shoulder to shoulder with the men, have defended their socialist motherland and are participating in socialist revolution and construction to ensure that Albania, the beacon of socialism in Europe, does not change its colour.

Women's participation in national liberation wars are two fold:

At the fighting front: fighting with guns. Also as nurses, stretcher-bearers, message carriers, ammunition carriers, propagandists, etc.

In the rear areas: Carry on production work on fields and factories, transport grain to the front, women's militias to guard the villages, foil enemy attacks, co-ordinate attacks on enemy with main forces, propaganda and underground work to mobilize more people to join resistance wars. Schools and hospitals are also run by women mainly.

5. Degeneration of the Status of Women in the Soviet Union

Capitalist restoration has taken place in the first socialist state since the Khrushchev-Brezhnev clique usurped power. The dictatorship of big bureaucrat-monopoly capitalists prevails. Social-fascism internally, and social imperialism externally are the marked features.

Wage slavery, oppressive and exploitative conditions of work, unemployment and inflation, cultural degeneration, and even prostitution of women are all back.

Poverty: According to TASS, Nov. 1974, official figure of those living below poverty line is 25 million (a greatly watered down figure!)

Black marketeering on Food: In 1972 free market prices were 63% higher than the state-run market which are also high.

Hire and Fire: Peking Review, No. 1, 1975: Dushanbe Textile Combine - At this factory, Galiya and other women workers were subjected to very harsh treatment by leading officials there. Galiya stood up against their bullying, so she was sacked and her identity card taken away. She roamed all over for two months looking for a job but she failed because she had no identity card (i.e. 'she was a rebel'). In the end she committed suicide, an utter condemnation of the social fascist rule of the New Tsars!

Prostitution: Disease of capitalism

"Immorality and prostitution have taken wide proportions in the countries ruled by the revisionists. Declared or undeclared loose women fill the railroad and bus stations, the parks, the entrances to the theaters and motion picture halls. Typical is the case taken up by the newspaper 'Komsomolskaya Pravda' about a 19 year old girl that was summoned for the hundredth time by the organs of the police. Head erect, she told the police by way of protestation that she had no profession but in a single night she could pocket 100 U.S. dollars. She threatened the police with these words: 'Do you know who goes out with me? It is a U.S. newspaper correspondent and tomorrow he will place an energetic protest with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.'

From: "All-round degeneration and disintegration in the countries and parties ruled by the Revisionists", Tirana, Albania, 1968.

U.N. Conference on International Women's Year, June 19-July 2, 1975

At the 2-week Conference the "Group of 77" countries of the Third World put forward the draft "Declaration of Mexico" on emancipation of women. It pointed out: "Women as well as men together should eliminate colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, foreign domination and occupation, zionism, apartheid, racial discrimination, the acquisition of land by force and the recognition of such acquisition, since such practices inflict incalculable suffering on women, men and children The issue of inequality, as it affects the vast majority of the women of the world, is closely linked with the problem of underdevelopment, which exists as a result not only of unsuitable internal structures, but also of a profoundly unjust world economic system . . . it is therefore essential to establish and implement with urgency the new international economic order."

Comrade Li Su-wen, a woman worker and head of the Chinese delegation, spoke on June 23rd. She pointed out: "Clearly, the primary task at present in the struggle for women's emancipation is to fight imperialism, colonialism and particularly hegemonism of the two superpowers. Only when this struggle is carried out successfully, while giving due attention to and solving the special demands and problems of women, can the cause of women's emancipation be pushed ahead steadily." (see full speech of Comrade Li Su-wen in Peking Review No. 27, July 4, 1975).

The two superpowers felt very enraged and impotent at this militant anti-hegemony stand, so they tried to mislead women's movements by various erroneous lines. The U.S. position is that women's struggle is "non-political". The Soviet revisionists, social-imperialists peddled the line of "disarmament", "peace", etc. That "detente is opening up favourable prospects" for the achievement of women's emancipation, that "only under the conditions of peace and reduction of military expenditure" can women "win their defined social rights." Clearly, the aim of both the superpowers was to oppose the declaration of the Third World countries and the principled and most correct stand taken by the

Chinese delegation, for the sole purpose of misleading the women and alienating them from the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism.

What is significant to note is that the bourgeoisie (British bourgeoisie in particular as reactionary ideologues) at the same time held a parallel conference in Mexico City called the "International Women's Year Tribune". It was conducted by bourgeois agents, i.e. the Women's Libbers with Germain Greer as spokesman. Their aim was to draw attention away from the U.N. Conference where the super-powers and the bourgeoisie received crushing defeat. They peddled "anti-men" lines, totally opposing the anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic stand of the U.N. declaration. The British Observer of July 6, 1975 stated with obvious satisfaction: "From the first, the U.N. conference came under fire" by the "Tribune".

Immediately after the U.N. Conference on women, the British bourgeoisie also hosted in London the International European Women's Conference. This conference peddled reformist lines and lines about "peace" etc.

This was followed by the CPGB "festival" to mark International Women's Year on July 12th. There was a lot of reformist trash about free abortions, equal pay, nurseries, trade unionism, etc. Also peddled the line of "disarmament", "peace" and "detente". As the local agents of the Soviet social-imperialists they mentioned the U.N. Conference only in passing, but carefully avoided to highlight the militant spirit of that Conference in the stand taken against imperialism and hegemonism. The CPGB further exposed its revisionist, renegadry features in the three part photo exhibition that it put up. The contents were as follows:

- (a) Past - The bourgeoisie's "Woman Suffrage" movement and its leaders, Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst, "representing" working women's tradition! (see Point 7 on the "Woman Suffragettes").
- (b) Present - Showed the involvement of British women in trade unions and students unions, i.e. the attempt by the bourgeoisie to contain the militant upsurge of women today.
- (c) Future - Soviet Union and other revisionist and social-fascist countries as models. (see Point 5 on the degeneration of the status of women in the revisionist countries).

Note: Nothing on the revolutionary tradition of women.
Nothing on the role of the Chinese women and women's participation in national liberation wars.

7. The Struggle of two lines on Woman Question in Britain

(a) Marx, Engels, Eleanor Marx Aveling, etc. were influencing and organizing working men and women in England. e.g. Eleanor Marx's role amongst the working class in the 1880s and 1890s.

In keeping with the tradition of the great Chartist movement in which working women also took part, women workers were involved in the mighty wave of working class upsurge in the 1880s and onwards. e.g. Bryant and May Matchgirls' Strike, 1888 - Inspired by the militancy of other unskilled workers the 700 women and girls in Bryant and May came out on strike. They had not been organized into a union and had no funds, however, they could bear their oppressive conditions no more. The people donated funds for them to help them with their strike. The employers were so stunned by this outburst of militancy that they were forced to give in to the demands of the working women.

1911: A revolutionary high tide was building up among the working class in that period. While the London Dock strike was at its height in August, 1911, the women of the jam, glue and pickles factories in Bermondsey poured out into the streets, shouting and singing, demanding higher wages. 15,000 women cheered Ben Tillet, one of the dockers' leaders, at a meeting in Southwark Park. Constant processions filled the streets. Mary MacArthur, president of the National Federation of Women Workers opened a strike headquarters in Bermondsey Institute. Inside 3 weeks, the employers had given in to the women's demands in 18 out of 20 factories.

The Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.), founded in 1903 and led by bourgeois agents like Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst, comes up against this background of increasing militancy of working women. It was a bourgeois women's struggle for the right to vote, pushing a limited Woman Suffrage as opposed to Universal Adult Suffrage. 17 conditions had to be met by women to gain the vote (e.g. university degree) which disqualified all working women.

Outstanding Communist and women's leader, Clara Zetkin, said of the Suffragettes: "If we examine carefully the limited Woman Suffrage, it is shown to be in the last resort a more or less disguised right of the purse or of property... Far from being a means of getting rid of the political discontent of the entire female sex, the limited Woman Suffrage, increasing the power of the propertied classes, would be a means to maintain the political and social slavery of the exploited masses."

Miss Mabel Hope, one of the leaders of the trade union of the Postal Telegraphists, pointed out in 1906: "A limited Bill would not help the women workers; it would only enable the richer women to oppress the women workers. The entire agitation of the Woman Suffragists arises not out of the class-war, but out of the struggle of the sexes. To us, however, the men workers stand much nearer than the rich women."

Clara Zetkin further exposed the reactionary class nature of the limited Woman Suffragists by pointing out that they have "opposed up to now the better legal protection of female labour" in mines and factories on the excuse of "principle of the equality of the sexes", "whereas in reality they were defending nothing else than the unlimited freedom of exploitation of the propertied over the non-propertied." (our emphasis).

Clara Zetkin showed the progressive role played by the Adult Suffrage Society, founded in 1905 in England by "women comrades who belonged in the majority to the Socialist Democratic Front. Under the leadership of Miss Margaret Bondfield, these have done much to bring the struggle of women for political recognition out of the narrow bed of bourgeois conceptions and bourgeois class interests into the broad stream of the proletarian class struggle of the fight for Adult Suffrage."

When the imperialist world war began in 1914, the "Suffragette" (paper of WSPU) changed its name to "Britannia" and became one of the most ferocious advocates of military conscription! Mrs. Pankhurst went all over the country, to America, etc. campaigning for the British imperialist war effort.

In the 1920s Mrs. Pankhurst stood as Conservative candidate Member of Parliament in Whitechapel. Christabel went to Canada and became propagandist for the second coming of Christ, thus revealing completely their bourgeois class position. But how many people know the full facts about the WSPU? For CPGB etc. today to promote Woman Suffrage led by WSPU and the Pankhursts clearly reveals that they are the agents of the bourgeoisie!

(b) The CPGB, as well as CPB(ML), CPE(ML) and other so-called Marxist-Leninist organizations do not make the inheritance and defence of the proletarian revolutionary tradition of women as their orientating guideline. As such, the CPGB does not put forward the necessity for proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The others, the neo-revisionists, put forward reformist path of trade unionism and other secondary and non issues because they do not foresee the victory of world revolution and the necessity to establish the international dictatorship of the proletariat.

CPGB puts emphasis on equal pay, free abortions, trade unionism, etc, by "electing a Labour Govt. with socialist policies". This is an out and out revisionist line of peaceful parliamentary road to socialism, i.e. the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie must be maintained intact. They want to effect change at the level of attitudes without removing the class basis of wrong ideas: "...whole labour movement should take new initiative on equality for women, in action, in discussion, and in fighting against attitudes and ideas about women which only help the divide-and-rule tactics of the capitalist classes..." (Rosemary Small, editor of 'Link') They promote secondary and non issues e.g. child-welfare, rent campaigns, etc. so as to divert women from involving in political and ideological struggles against the bourgeoisie and the 2 superpowers. CPGB says equal pay is important but,

"The main drawback is .. only a minority of women will benefit from it", and yet they want to involve women in this type of struggle. Note: The following facts about "Equal pay for equal work". TUC first demanded it in 1888. In 1969, the TUC celebrated 50th anniversary of Suffrage movement and stated the launching of equal pay campaign. Labour MP Hamilton led a march on 'Equal pay'. In House of Lords Lady Seare asked for commission to be set up to investigate on 'equal pay'. i.e. 'equal pay' has the blessing of Lady Seare, Labour MP, TUC, CPGB as well as other so-called M-L organizations ! The bourgeoisie are not going to give equal pay, but they want to develop consciousness of the concept of bourgeois rights in women.

CPB(ML) puts emphasis also on trade unionism, equal pay, nurseries, etc. "All militants, all class-conscious workers, all communists should recruit into unions". Since trade unions is only means through which to struggle, they say, the only way housewives can involve themselves in struggle is through rent strikes. "women are relatively isolated when they stay at home and their struggle against the ruling class cannot be so effective as when they are at work .. There will be issues which affect them directly, which they can and should get involved in, such as rent strikes and campaigns concerning their children's welfare.. the only way she is going to solve any of her long-term problems is by joining with her husband and fighting for a living wage and a fairer economic system."

Some other so-called Marxist-Leninist organizations even play up Soviet Union in an indirect way, e.g. Union of Women for Liberation, says: "Soviet women, even today, continues to occupy a far better place in Soviet society than her counterpart in... capitalist countries."

'CPE(ML)' overall line is to go into trade unions, participate in bourgeois elections under all kinds of "left" slogans. Their practice is not to organize women and this is borne out in the line of Carol Reakes, bourgeois agent heading that Party, that "women come in and subvert the male cadres" !

Note: All the organizations which make secondary issues such as equal pay, free abortions, nurseries, etc. as the main content of their program in organising women divert them from the principal issue of proletarian state power. They all make a hullabaloo about liberating women from the drudgery of household work. But on this question too, it is only proletarian state power that will provide various facilities that will free women from household chores. Lenin said in 1919; "Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins .. Public catering establishments, nurseries, kindergartens -- here we have examples of these shoots (of communism)."

Today, in Socialist China under firm proletarian dictatorship we see how this guideline of Lenin has been implemented. There is lot of stress also on men and women sharing household work. (see China Reconstructs, No. 3, 1975).

The revisionist and neo-revisionist line on women going into trade unions and fight for secondary issues is "reformist" line at best. It is totally irrelevant and retrogressive when examined from the standpoint of the excellent situation in the world today, i.e. stage when the 2 superpowers are extremely isolated in the world as never before and are on the verge of being attacked by the people of the whole world led by Socialist China and Chairman Mao. At such a stage of final conflict with the impending victory of world revolution and the establishment of the International Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the "reformist" line on women becomes totally irrelevant and in practice, counter-revolutionary.

The ideological and political conscious of working women must be raised about this so that they grasp that their specific problems can only be resolved on the basis of first resolving the principal question facing the people of the world. Furthermore, the proletarian women must be imbued with the historic mission of the proletariat and the revolutionary tradition of fighting women. They must firmly unite with working men and women all over the world under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party of China and participate actively in burying the old world of colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism and ushering in a new world of new men and women, building together socialism and marching onward to communism.

WHAT IS ROAD TO EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN?

Peking, June 26, 1975 (Commentary by Hsinhua Correspondent) -- What is the road to the emancipation of women? The answer has been provided by practice in the Chinese revolution, which shows that to win the emancipation of women, it is necessary to arouse millions upon millions of women to fight for national independence, class emancipation and socialism in the first place. The overriding task today is to oppose imperialism, colonialism and, in particular, the hegemony of the two superpowers. Only victories in this struggle, coupled with fulfillment of the specific demands of women, will steadily advance the cause of women's emancipation.

Marxism regards the emancipation of women as an important issue and a component part of the cause of the emancipation of the proletariat. Marx said: "Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment." Lenin said: "The experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it." As a rule, the destiny of women in a country is closely linked with that of the entire nation and people, from whose struggle the women's emancipation movement is inseparable.

The women of China are profoundly aware of this.

China was a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country before liberation, when the Chinese people were weighed down by three big mountains -- imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. Women were then dominated by four systems of authority -- political, clan, religious and masculine. They had no political or social standing, and were discriminated against in the family. They could not bring their intelligence and talent into play and were even subjected to inhuman treatment. Many suffered as slave girls, concubines and child brides, and were beaten up or sold as chattels.

Quite a number of progressive women sought ways to win emancipation for their sex. Some of them held that women were oppressed by men and could free themselves only in a struggle against the latter. Others attributed the inequality between the sexes to the uneducated state of women and argued that education meant emancipation for them. Still others defined the principal goal of the women's movement as the winning of legal rights and the guarantee of equality between men and women by state legislation. They all tried to win emancipation for women by handling the question as an isolated one, and failed to see that the oppression of women was by nature a class oppression and that the exploited and oppressed classes could win their rights and emancipation only by fighting against imperialism and the exploiting classes within the country. Thus the struggles of these early progressives achieved little. It was after the birth of the Communist Party of China that the Chinese women's movement took on a completely new look under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism.

Led by the Party and along with the rest of the people, the women of China have conducted unflinching struggles and won great victories in the protracted and arduous national-democratic revolution and socialist revolution. With the demolition of the three big mountains and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese people stood up, and women freed themselves from slavery and humiliation. The institution of the socialist system in China eliminated once for all the class and social roots of the oppression of women. They won equality of rights with men politically, economically, culturally and socially as well as in family life. But, as Chairman Mao teaches, "Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realised in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole." Over the past 20 years and more, women's emancipation has gained in depth amidst the steady advances in China's socialist revolution and construction. In particular, Chinese women have achieved a tremendous ideological emancipation in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the movement to criticise Lin Biao and Confucius by repudiating the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, which had poisoned people's minds for over 2,000 years, and refuting such reactionary slanders against women as "men are superior to women". Militant and inspired, they are playing an increasing role and performing greater merits in revolution. Their status is higher than ever.

These changes in the status of Chinese women are a result of the victory of the Chinese people's revolution.

Chinese women know from their protracted struggle that the emancipation of women is a common cause of the entire people and must be achieved in a concerted struggle by both men and women. On the other hand, the emancipation of women is in the first place a cause involving the vital interests of the masses of women, and has to be won in a struggle by women mobilized in their hundreds of millions instead of being bestowed on them as a favour or monopolised by a few. It is essential to educate the women masses, raise their political consciousness, and help them build up their abilities and enhance their confidence in the course of struggle. The greater their contributions to society, the higher their status.

The women of China share a common destiny with the oppressed women in all other countries, particularly the third world countries, in the long experience of suffering under the plunder and oppression by colonialism and imperialism. Although many colonies have attained political independence since the end of the Second World War, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism are still committing aggression and spoliation by all manner of tricks. The superpowers, in particular, are feverishly pursuing hegemonism and power politics, scrambling for spheres of influence everywhere, encroaching on the sovereignty of other countries, interfering in their internal affairs and seizing control of their economic lifelines. This seriously impairs and threatens the independence and sovereignty of these countries and the basic rights of the people there and at the same time jeopardises the subsistence and security of women. To win emancipation, therefore, the oppressed women of various countries must first of all struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism.

The world revolutionary situation is excellent. The struggle of the people of all countries against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism is surging forward throughout the world and dealing heavy blows at the superpowers. The oppressed women of various countries are plunging into this revolutionary torrent to fight for emancipation. Confronted with this vigorous rise of the revolution, the superpowers are having a tough time, and so try by hook or by crook to undermine the revolutionary struggle of the people of the world and mislead the women's movement. One superpower has laid itself out to play up the so-called "non-political" nature of the women's movement. But how can there be any emancipation of women if it is separated from the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, particularly the struggle against superpower hegemonism? The other superpower has cried itself hoarse hawking the trash of "detente" and "disarmament", alleging that "detente is opening up favourable prospects" for the realisation of the aims of the international women's year and that "only under the conditions of peace and reduction of military expenditure" can women "win their defined social rights" and so on and so forth. This claim that "detente" and "disarmament" are prerequisites to women's emancipation is undoubtedly prompted by ulterior motives; it is an attempt to hoodwink the people and women of the world in a vain scheme to lead the women's movement astray by alienating it from the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. But people know only too well that this very superpower is coupling cries about "disarmament" with actual arms expansion year after year, and high-sounding phrases about "detente" with frenzied contention for world hegemony from day to day. Mankind has experienced two world wars in half a century, and it is understandable that the people of the world, especially women, yearn for peace and security, because of their tremendous suffering from the ravages of war. But they want genuine peace and security, not sham. The superpowers are playing on the people's good hopes to cover up their arms expansion, war preparations and drive for world hegemony, yet they are bound to fail shamefully, in face of the awakening masses the world over.

Chairman Mao teaches that it is necessary to "carry out Marx's teaching that only by emancipating all mankind can the proletariat achieve its own final emancipation". Led by the Communist Party of China, the women of China will always act in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, enhance their unity with the oppressed nations and people and women the world over, and fight along with them against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism in order to win and safeguard national independence, social progress and women's rights.