

Mar. 20, 1982

Dear Comrades,

Women Against Imperialism in the Bay Area is writing this letter as part of the process of developing some common understandings about the proposed Women in Revolution Campaign. We know people have been talking about the campaign in a number of different organizations across the country and we're excited about the possibilities which it offers for building the anti-imperialist women's movement in this country--strengthening concrete support among women for national liberation movements both inside and outside the current borders, struggling for a correct view of what women's liberation means and how it can be won, and developing some common practice around these issues. In this letter we're trying to outline the main points which we feel the campaign should be based on. We are hoping this letter can generate discussion which can lead to consolidation around a conception and a set of politics for the campaign. The proposal is very rough and written in shorthand, and not intended to be a piece of propaganda.

I. POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

We see the campaign focussing on the participation of women in revolution. We want to struggle for an understanding that the liberation of women has to be a fundamental goal of any revolution and the liberation of women can only be achieved through revolution--the total transformation of society. We are participating in this campaign because we as white women in the US want to join with women around the world in recognizing imperialism as our enemy and in joining the fight against it.

The oppression of women takes place in the context of a world dominated by the system of imperialism. This is a system where a few oppressor nations live at the expense of hundreds of millions of people of the oppressed nations. The US became the number one world power by establishing a vast and rich home base from the forcible incorporation of the land, labor and resources of the Puerto Rican, Mexican, Native American and Black nations.

Women's oppression goes back tens of thousands of years to the beginnings of private property. Today our exploited and powerless position is enforced by an imperialist system which depends on our double shift of labor: working class women work low-paid, dead end "women's jobs" and then perform another shift of labor in the home, reproducing and maintaining the workforce, socializing the new generation, and providing personal and sexual services for men. Our degradation is enforced by the imperialist state and all its institutions--the police, courts, schools, health system, welfare, etc. It is enforced by male supremacist violence, porn, incest, and the oppression of lesbians.

The lives of the women in the oppressed nations are completely shaped by the fact that they are members of nations that are subject to genocidal attack. The oppression of women in Azania, for instance, is set in a society where 40% of the children in the bantustans die before the age of five. Women of the oppressed nations have led in the understanding that there can be no liberation of women outside the context of the struggle for independence, socialism, and the defeat of US imperialism.

The women's movement of the 1960s had its roots in the mass movements which grew in response to the struggles of Viet Nam and the Black Liberation Movement. Significant sectors of the women's movement rejected the whole system and saw that our liberation could not be separated from the liberation of all oppressed peoples. Within this movement lesbians have played leading roles,

breaking ties with male supremacy and affirming the importance of women's independence and solidarity.

In 1982 the US is moving hard to the right. Having lost power and resources from Zimbabwe to Nicaragua, the imperialist domestic strategy is to force colonized peoples to bear the brunt of the crisis; masses of white people are enthusiastically supporting this strategy. The impact of white supremacy and cooptation has resulted in large sections of the women's movement also moving to the right. We see this, for instance, in NOW's position calling women to serve equal to men in the imperialist armed forces, and encouraging women to join the police; we see this in the fact that much of the anti-rape movement works closely with the police.

What are the choices facing women in this period? We can support the imperialist strategy of intensifying white supremacy to cushion the effects of crisis at the expense of colonized people. Or we can ally with national liberation struggles inside and outside the US to fight for the total defeat of this system. We either accept the violence of the oppressor, or we support the revolutionary violence of the oppressed. There's no third path. To try to build an alternative women's culture without challenging the whole system means accepting the colonialist, white supremacist foundations of US society. It means abandoning a real fight for women's liberation at a time when the gains made by women are coming under fierce attack. This is why we are committed to building an anti-imperialist women's movement under the leadership of the forces of national liberation.

Imperialism can be and is being destroyed. People's War for national liberation and socialism is the strategy which has broken imperialism's grip in country after country since Viet Nam. From Azania to Ireland, from Palestine to El Salvador and Puerto Rico, young and old, women, men and children are mobilizing to win political, economic and social control over their nations.

We have to understand that these wars for national liberation don't only exist on the other side of the globe. They are also here in the US where genocidal conditions of colonialism insure that people will rise to reclaim their nations. This war in America will intensify until Puerto Rico is independent and socialist, until the Black Nation has won land and independence, until Native nations have sovereignty, until the occupied north of Mexico (the so-called US Southwest) is reunified with a socialist Mexico. It is the success of these national struggles of the internal colonies which will tear apart the US empire from within, dealing the deathblow to the system of imperialism.

From the Congo to Ireland, from the 11 Puerto Rican POWs to the October 20th freedom fighters, revolutionary freedom fighters embody the struggle against imperialism. Within other imperialist countries such as Italy and West Germany, the combatants of the Red Brigades and the Red Army Faction have declared war on imperialism. Behind prison walls, POWs are carrying on the war. Their stand is a call to their peoples to directly confront the enemy. The leadership and strength they give to the struggle makes POWs and captured freedom fighters a profound threat to imperialism. This is why the imperialist governments portray them as criminals and terrorists, setting the stage for their torture, isolation, and murder. All freedom fighters and POWs must have our strongest support.

In the campaign, we want to focus particular attention on the women freedom fighters and POWs. They are important examples of what a liberated woman is and how liberation actually is being won.

Around the world, women are moving to the forefront of revolutionary struggle. Through their participation in all aspects of the struggle, women are destroying centuries-old definitions of what women can be. These women are participating in the exercise of power, taking their destinies into their own hands. This is why in Nicaragua the new revolutionary government passed a law prohibiting the exploitation of women's bodies to sell products; why in Mozambique incorrigible wife-beaters are jailed. By taking full responsibility for the transformation of society, women are helping to forge peoples power based on the socialist values of ending all exploitation and the oppression of women.

Putting tens of thousands of women in arms, building powerful women's organizations, and mobilizing a deep commitment to women's liberation as the touchstone of revolution, the revolutionary women of the oppressed nations are leading the world struggle for the liberation of women. They are showing that the path to women's liberation is through full participation in people's wars for independence, socialism, and women's liberation. In the words of the Organization of Mozambican Women:

"The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory."

II. How the Campaign Might Work

We think major tours and perhaps a few major demonstrations should be nationally coordinated. We've been talking about a possible tour of a woman from the PAC in October, a possible tour from Women Against Imperialism in W. Germany or Ireland in the winter, and hopefully another tour(s) from a liberation struggle closer to home. We should begin to build a political relationship with Women Against Imperialism groups in Europe, and see culminating the year's activities with a major international International Women's Day Demonstration in Europe and across the US.

Other projects, events, and propaganda could be initiated and carried out by individual organizations sponsoring the campaign or by groups in a particular city or region--based upon the agreed-on politics of the campaign, of course. These ideas or materials could then be used by others involved in the campaign if they chose to do so (for instance WAI in the Bay Area wants to do a poster series--we could send you copies if you wanted and you could distribute the posters too.) We think we should do a lot of regional organizing to encourage women in various cities to participate in the national activities (tours, demos), and to initiate local activities.

We think we should immediately begin work on a piece of propaganda (a Call) that would be worked out nationally and would define the politics of the campaign. We think we should work to get this propaganda out by early May. We also think we should do a series of articles for the women's press nationally. We should develop a general article introducing the campaign (based on the national call) to run in June women's papers. Then we could have a series of articles on various aspects of the campaign which would be spread out over the

rest of the year, and which could be taken on by different organizations working on the campaign. (We need to develop the content of this proposal.)

Here are some of the ideas we've been thinking about doing to build the campaign: slideshow on women in revolution, poster series, calender or datebook, T shirts, greeting cards, guerilla theatre, women's singing group, film series, study group, program on revolutionary solutions to violence against women, regional distribution of anti-imperialist women's literature and propaganda, get on straight radio and TV.

We're looking forward to hearing from you, and are very excited about beginning to implement the campaign.

In the struggle,

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