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SOCIALIST FEMINISM IN LATIN AMERICA

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Abstract: The women's movement around the world takes many stances, including women's rights, feminism, women's research, women's auxiliaries of political and religious organizations, and socialist feminism. Because of its unique political and economic history, socialist feminism is the dominant emergent stance of the women's movement in Latin America. The movements in Brazil, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Chile are examined, and socialist feminism related to both the international women's movement and to the political trends and constraints of the current political situation within each country. Women's movements in other Latin American countries are also briefly discussed.

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SOCIALIST FEMINISM IN LATIN AMERICA

The Latin American women's movement is as varied and complex as its North American or European counterparts. As in Europe and North America, it is both a product of women's situation within the containing societies and of the political and intellectual movements specific to the area. While women's movements are widely varied among Latin American nations, all of them share the common context of dependent development,¹ and most are located in relatively repressive political settings. The resulting differences in perceptions have led to clashes with First World feminists in public international convocations.

This article attempts to describe one of the leading forces of the Latin American women's movement--socialist feminism. To do so, it is necessary to differentiate existing stances vis-a-vis women's problems. These stances can lead to action at either the individual or collective level. For example, a women's rights group may organize in Peru to reform the family code. In Venezuela, individual women may pressure to rewrite the family code but do so as employees of a bureaucracy or as friends of politicians. Thus, the stances presented involve definition of women's problems, self-identification as a result of the analysis, and action engaged in to solve them.

By the early 1980s, different stances toward women's problems in Latin America have evolved. While not necessarily different from stances that exist in North America and Europe, they have different implications in the Latin American settings. These stances are: (1) women's rights, (2) feminism, (3) women's research, (4) women's auxiliaries of political and religious organizations, and (5) socialist feminism. In North America and Europe, there is a strong radical feminist/lesbian separatist stance as well. Except for a few small groups in Brazil and Mexico, however, that stance does not play a part in women's politics in most of Latin America. These stances do not form an ideal typology, because they are not mutually exclusive. Describing and relating them, however, is heuristically valuable in understanding the process currently underway.

Drawing on the Brazilian case, Hahner has developed a good way of differentiating feminism from women's rights. "Feminism embraces all aspects of the emancipation of women and includes any struggle designed to elevate their status socially, politically, or economically; it concerns women's self-concepts as well as their position in society. In contrast, women's rights . . . tend to define, more narrowly, the emancipation of women as the winning of legal rights."² Women's rights involves including women in existing structures. Feminism includes the reorganization of personal life, dealing not only with questions of the economy and the polity, but of sexuality and the family. Identification as a feminist means confronting men. Feminism deals directly and personally with the problem of patriarchy--machismo in the Latin American setting. Those with a women's rights stance see the problem as unequal access to resources. Men are not an enemy or even a competitor for resources, but potential allies to be won over.

Feminism and women's rights are also distinct from women's research as a stance for approaching women's roles and status in society. Women's research studies women--what they do and how they do it. Women's problems tend to be seen as based in social and political processes. While women's research can be feminist, this is often not the case in Latin America.³ Those with a women's research stance identify as intellectuals. Their action involves increasing the available knowledge about women to further illuminate historical processes.

Political parties and churches are both very active in organizing women in Latin America. These organizations see women's groups as the best way to mobilize women for the ends of the larger corporate body. Women's problems, for those with this stance, stem either from social class oppression (for progressive groups) or from inadequate performance of women's traditional roles (for less progressive groups). Those adopting this stance identify first--or solely--with party or church.

Socialist feminism is concerned with many of the same sources of oppression as leftist groups and the progressive church in Latin America. It has developed relatively recently compared to the other stances toward women. Socialist feminism, in contrast to feminism, tries to unite the problems of gender oppression with those of class oppression. Latin American socialist feminists, like North American Marxist feminists, attempt to synthesize the contradictions between class and sex, between production and reproduction, and between the public and private realms.⁴ Socialist feminists identify both as leftists and as feminists. Action involves relating to working class women's groups as well as confronting cross-class sexism.

These stances can be only individual or can be at a group level as well. In many countries there are individuals who share an analysis that fits one stance (since each stance implies some action), but who do not join with others in the hard and often acrimonious work of building an organization and participating in the day-to-day struggles organization entails. While this paper will mention the origins of individuals within socialist feminism, the stress will be on the newly organized groups and the countries in which the organizations seem to be growing most rapidly. Because of the newness of the movement, its rapid emergence, and its existence in a turbulent environment, no description of socialist feminism can be current. Hopefully, this description will provide a base from which more detailed analyses can be drawn.

This study is based on three and one-half years' work between September 1978 and February 1982 with women's groups in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua, where, as a member of the Ford Foundation staff based in Bogota and later as a consultant from the United States, I was charged with helping develop Foundation women's programs. Shorter visits were made to Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico to determine the situation in these countries. Information on these countries, as well as others not visited, is based

on individual and group conversations, analysis of published documents, and historical readings. Earlier versions of this paper were critiqued by feminists in a number of Latin American countries.

Country Differences

Socialist feminism seems to be strongest where there has been a tradition of multiple and politically effective leftist parties: Peru, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. The fruits of such organizing are clearly felt by socialist feminists despite recent repressive regimes in Peru and the Dominican Republic and a current strongly repressive military dictatorship in Chile. Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil have smaller socialist feminist movements. Puerto Rico, along with Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Brazil, are characterized by women's groups that are organized sub-units of political parties, although in Nicaragua the largest and most important group, Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE), named after a martyr in the struggle against Somoza, has begun to take a feminist socialist approach internally.⁵ The Faribundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) in El Salvador has a strong plank on women's equality in its revolutionary platform.⁶ (See page 31 for a glossary of organizations discussed.)

Countries also differ by the degree of cooperation among feminist groups. Mexico has a large number of feminist groups and a coordinating committee uniting many of the groups. A socialist feminist coordinating committee exists in Peru. There are women's movement coordinating groups in several major Brazilian cities and a similar series of coordinating groups in Colombian cities.

A feminist movement exists in Argentina, separate from women intellectuals looking at the issue of class oppression. In Argentina and Uruguay, collective research on women exists, particularly in the private research organizations that have sprung up in response to the closing off of intellectual inquiry within the universities through the firing--and sometimes execution--of professors. These centers struggle along through funding from North American and European foundations combined with the personal sacrifice of the scholars within them. These groups, however, are generally without feminist orientation, although one or two members of the research team may identify as feminists, as in the case of the Research Group for the Study of the Conditions of Uruguayan Women (GRECMU) in Uruguay or the Center for the Study of State and Society (CEDES) in Argentina. In Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay extremely repressive military dictatorships make overtly socialist orientations dangerous to express.

In Venezuela, women's issues have been integrated into the government structure through the efforts of individuals interested in women's rights. A few feminists, often with European training, can be found in the capital city, Caracas, and small feminist groups come together from time to time. There are groups in Tachira, Maracaibo, and Merida as well, generally with intellectual and cultural orientations coupled with feminist analysis.

In Paraguay, where all political activity is repressed, several isolated scholars have a passing interest in women in the labor force. In Costa Rica, there are a few feminists and some women's research at the university. Honduras and Guatemala have little women's activity, although in Guatemala, prior to the current wave of right-wing violence, political activists were working with peasant women. In Honduras, some church groups are working with women's groups as part of community development efforts. In Panama, a women's committee has organized in solidarity with Chile, in response to the repression and force exile of Chileans under the military dictatorship of Pinochet.

International Linkages

Strong waves of political repression in Latin America have driven men and women who have been politically active away from their countries. These exiles, primarily from the Southern Cone countries of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile in the 1970s and 1980s, and from Brazil and the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and early 1970s, returned to their countries with an awareness of feminism from their experience abroad. Women returning to Brazil and Chile in particular served as an important source of feminists organizing.

The women's movement historically in Latin America has been ambivalent about international linkages, especially with the women's movement in the United States. While early U. S. feminists made tours of Latin America and met with women's groups in a number of countries,⁷ including Peru and Brazil, these visits are not chronicled by the Latin American sources. More recently, strongly nationalist and anti-imperialist frames of reference have led to rejection of "matriarchal" ideological influences from the North, although local groups read and translated some of the key feminist literature from North America and Europe. Socialist feminists, inspired by the linkages made at international fora such as those in Mexico and particularly Copenhagen, have been seeking out intercontinental linkages to other socialist feminist groups. The success of this activity has been the meeting in Bogota, Colombia, in June 1981, which is well-described by Silverstein⁸ and Navarro.⁹

The continuing search for both affirmation and tactics from similar groups in similar circumstances--which entails an analysis of both the problems of dependency and the problems of patriarchy--leads to a growing Latin American feminist solidarity that is infusing other stances as well. The UNESCO-sponsored women's studies meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 1981, for example, led to the formation of a Latin American women's studies association, when a similar effort failed at a 1978 meeting on research on women in the labor force in Rio and a 1977 meeting on women's studies in Mexico City. Important in both the Bogota and Rio meetings was the Latin American origin of the organization and, in the case of Bogota, most of the funding. The formal linkages being established are based on the past initiatives and perceptions of current needs.

Origins of Socialist Feminism

Many of the women now identified as socialist feminists began as activists (militantes) within left-wing political parties, often at the side of a male partner. They became frustrated by their continuing peripheral role in the parties--and the parties' consistent sacrifice of women's issues for other matters deemed more salient to transforming society.

In Peru and the Dominican Republic, as well as other countries, women disillusioned with party activism as a solution to women's oppression came together for their own emancipation (revindicacion), much as anti-war and civil rights female activists in the United States formed the basis for the second wave of U. S. feminism,¹⁰ and women active in the anti-slavery movement became feminists during the first wave.¹¹ The groups that formed began serious dialogue with each other, often confronting hostility and ridicule from highly respected male activists because of their "separatist" activities. They debated the relations between class and gender domination in order to develop a coherent theory to guide action. Because of their class analysis of society, coupled with the understanding of the problems of living in a dependent capitalist country, they divided their efforts between internal examination of their own situation as middle class women (something they were a bit hesitant to address as somehow antithetical to the class struggle) and external linkages with groups of working class women.

The dialectic between class-specific issues and gender-encompassing issues informs both the theory and practice of Latin American socialist feminists. Initial attempts to deal with the class issue tried to build on existing working class and peasant women's organizations to form alliances that met the mutual needs of each group.

Some political parties and church groups have seen the need in Latin America to bring women together as willing hands for their work. Parts of the Catholic church, in the search for social justice initiated by the Conference of Latin American Catholic bishops in Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, found women did not integrate easily into community-based organizations. While not recognizing women's problems as in any way separate from the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, the utility of separate women's groups was realized. Political parties increasingly not only recognized the traditional role of women's committee, but found that sometimes, especially with the "cover" of International Women's Year (IWY), creating working class women's organizations was their only safe way of organizing.

Women's groups formed by liberal clergy and nuns, as well as by political parties, based their organization on a Paulo Freire type of consciousness raising.¹² That methodology led to an awareness of economic exploitation based on class and international economic dependency. Both the political parties and the Church, however, viewed women's role in traditional gender-specific terms. Even the most progressive church

groups seem hesitant to discuss issues relating to women's problems with their husbands that might lead to a break in a mythical working class solidarity that such groups were organized to reinforce.

Indeed, in Bogota, Colombia, and in Piura, Peru, working class oriented Jesuit organizations began separate organizations for poor women because of the irritation on the part of male community organizers that the women were ruining everything by their lack of understanding of the class situation. The women did not participate in demonstrations and strikes and tried to prevent their husbands and children from participating. According to the organizers, the women tended to think first in terms of immediate income and safety concerns, without appreciation of the long-term gains to be made in supporting the principles around which the actions were oriented. It has been difficult for feminists to work with these women's auxiliary groups. The male organizers often view the feminists, even socialist feminists, as puppets of imperialism, deflecting class struggle.

These differences in analysis, although coupled with strongly shared values confronting domination originating from social class and the international economic order, have led most social feminist groups to seek autonomous organizations that could then form linkages with other movements, but not be controlled by them. Capitalism is defined as a major part of the problem, along with patriarchy. Thus, neither feminism alone nor party affiliation are sufficient.

Origins and Identity

Until recently, leftist women, both those forced into exile and political activists in their own countries, avoided the label "feminist" and vocally denied any links to First World women's movements, particularly those based in the United States. One reason for this was the usurpation in Latin America of the feminist label by groups of middle class women dedicated to supporting the status quo. The second was a strong awareness of U. S. imperialism. Women activists responded against U. S. control of culture and the economy, as well as attempts to control the polity in many Latin American countries. They have had personal experience with the U. S. invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, with the C. I. A.-backed destabilization campaigns against Allende in the early 1970s, and with the efforts of the Reagan administration to bring down the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. These are military aspects of imperialism that have resulted in the death and exile of the women or their family members. A third reason for dissociation from U. S. feminism was the perceived limits to the theoretical analysis they offered. Feminists in the United States are accused in Latin America of focusing on individual problems and ignoring the differential impact of social class and the political economic system on women.

Identity and International Presentation of Self

The lines between Third World socialist feminists and First world radical feminists were clearly drawn in Mexico City in the 1975 International Women's Year meeting. Latin American women in attendance at Mexico City tended to be either feminists of a bourgeois type concerned with government or with political party, or socialists of either intellectual or--in the exceptional case of Domitila Chungara de Barrios¹³--of worker origins, concerned with their leftist party or union. The Latin American leftist women in Mexico in 1975 focused on the appropriation of women's labor by the class system. They were unwilling to see the appropriation of women's sexuality as an issue, thereby allowing both bourgeois and socialist women to avoid having to confront problems of male domination. Both groups of Latin American women in attendance, despite strong ideological differences, agreed on the basic irrelevance of the North American feminist model for Latin American women's problems.

By the 1980 mid-decade meeting in Copenhagen, a socialist feminist movement with links to working class women's organizations had emerged in Chile, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic. A few of the women who formed both the theoretical and activist core of these groups went to Copenhagen. Although they still insisted on the differences between their movements for women and social change and those in other parts of the world, there was a feeling, at least on the part of some, that experiences could be fruitfully interchanged with feminists organizing grass roots groups throughout the world. (A Peruvian participant in a workshop on grass-roots organizing, however, pointed out to a North American farm wife, enthusiastically promoting similarities, that organizing the women on U. S. farms was far different from organizing Peruvian peasant women because of the international economic structures that condemned one group of women to a level of living unheard of by the other.)

Unlike the 1975 Mexico meetings, the socialist feminists arrived at the Copenhagen workshops with some solid experience in organizing and relating that practice to their theories of underdevelopment and women's oppression. The models of society underlying their activities had grown more complex with practice. They were particularly disturbed by some North American and European women who tended to generalize about a "homogeneous" Third World. Such First world women, who expected the Third World women to speak with one voice, were perceived as maternalistic, condescending, and in search of "causes." This was in contrast to other First World women who demonstrated some awareness of the complexity of Latin America--and a willingness to learn. Latin American feminists began to differentiate between those First World women who were ready to be educated about Third World problems and those who wanted to solve them for Third World women.¹⁴

Many of the North Americans in attendance tended to separate themselves from what they defined as political themes. This served as another source of separation from the Latin American socialist feminists, whose personal history as activists in struggles for national liberation made

such a separation of women's issues seem reactionary.¹⁵ Despite the clear realization of different modes of analysis, there was a sense of female solidarity that the participants had not felt at the 1975 meetings. This solidarity with non-Third World feminists was symbolized by the march, led by the Bolivian Domitila Chungara (a self-proclaimed non-feminist who is a mine workers' union organizer) to protest a bloody military coup in Bolivia.

Many socialist feminists in countries not having experienced recent revolutions, or in countries where bloody counter-revolutions had wiped out the attempts at social equity previously undertaken, were dismayed at the anti-feminism expressed by the official delegations from socialist countries and newly liberated non-socialist countries such as Nicaragua. The accusations of representatives from both Cuba and Iran that feminism was a negative current and an imperialistic mechanism for division was a depressing point of theoretical and practical differences for many Latin American socialist feminists.¹⁶ As Maruja Barrig from Peru pointed out, there were not only problems of a theoretical nature with North American feminists, but with the revolutionaries from Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, and Palestine as well, even though all the Peruvian groups there called themselves feminists and socialists:

Personally, the ideological terrorism that came in many moments seemed lamentable to me. Because when Domitila Chungara, the undisputed Bolivian union leader, said in an interview that the feminists were "degenerates who only wanted to get drunk like men," her political combativeness seemed to confer a papal infallibility on her. An even graver case was that of the Nicaraguan women who attended the Latin American women's seminar. With the authority of having conquered the Somoza dictatorship and built a revolution, they declared that there should not exist a "struggle for the woman" but a "struggle for liberation" as occurred in their country. The recipe for a given political moment cannot be translated mechanically to the other countries of Latin America which are living distinct stages of the class struggle and where, without doubt, in a situation (conyuntura) of armed struggle the women with socialist conviction would not question which struggle had priority.¹⁷

Barrig goes on to say that not only proletarian women have problems in Peru, but that some of the problems of university students converge with those of women workers. Thus, feminism is a legitimate area of analysis in the Peruvian situation. Her article on the Copenhagen meeting calls for a Peruvian feminist socialist movement to construct a theory and a practice of feminism that is not copied from other settings and which is appropriate to the Peruvian reality.

Latin American feminists were profoundly stimulated by the experience in Copenhagen, less by the meeting of the official delegations than by the Forum for Non-Governmental Organizations. The contacts they formed or renewed with each other, including those with the large Latin American

feminist exile community in Europe, seemed catalytic. There was clearly a need to articulate a Latin American feminist theory that stemmed from the Latin American political context.

A small but visionary group of Venezuelan women, "La Conjura," agreed, in a rump caucus of women from Latin America and the Caribbean in Copenhagen, to organize a meeting for the region in late 1981. The movement in Venezuela, however, was too small and disparate, and their resources too small for the high costs of a Caracas meeting, for them to go farther than asking Colombian feminists to take the lead. The Colombians, equally divided but much stronger numerically and organizationally, took on the task. The process of putting the meeting together, from deciding who should participate to what the themes should be, generated much hard work and emotion throughout the Colombian women's movement.¹⁸

Finally, through a series of struggles, the socialist feminist stance became the dominant one in the organization and running of the conference. Although postponed once again because of the difficulties of organization and internal agreement, the meeting was at last held in Bogota in June 1982. The interchange of experiences and the open discussions relating theory and practice were a milestone for the feminist movement as a regional phenomenon.¹⁹ As an immediate followup, November 25, 1982, was designated as the day to protest violence against women. The day was picked in honor of three sisters in the Dominican Republic who had organized against the Trujillo dictatorship, resisting both his sexual advances and his political oppression. On November 25 all three were brutally molested and murdered, mobilizing the Dominican population against the corruption and oppression which controlled their country in the person of Trujillo. The event was carried out particularly effectively in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Peru, where there was a wide poster and media campaign, as well as marches protesting violence against women.

In general, socialist feminism has built on an exile community with a feminist analysis and political activists disillusioned with political parties' treatment of women and women's issues. The development, however, differed among the diverse countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Four short country case studies follow that attempt to contrast developmental paths of Latin American socialist feminism.

BRAZIL

Brazil had a history of movements for feminism, as well as women's rights. Thus, the right of suffrage for women was achieved through pressure rather than governmental largess.²⁰ How does the current women's movement in Brazil relate to past feminism and current political structures? Marianne Schmink²¹ has done an excellent job of presenting the current state of the women's movement in Brazil in the context of the "abertura" (opening) politics. She traces the complexity of the contemporary women's movements' struggles of theory and praxis in a country emerging from a military dictatorship imposed in 1964.

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America, distinct in language and culture from its neighbors. The country was the first of the "new" military dictatorships, from which other oppressive regimes took lessons. The C. I. A. and U. S. military were active in both the overthrow of the elected government in 1964 and the repression that followed.²² Distrust of North Americans--of either sex--thus had logical roots.

Brazil has a large and dynamic economy compared with most of Latin America. The Brazilian "economic miracle" was much touted in the early 1970s, although it is now a much tarnished sort of miracle: not only did the poor get poorer despite a rapid growth in Gross National Product, but currently that growth has almost halted.²³ The military is gradually allowing an increase in popular participation through elections at the same time that an astoundingly high foreign debt and a highly militant labor force put contradictory pressures on economic policy. The Catholic Church in Brazil has come out as a strong supporter of the oppressed masses, and although the Brazilian Church contains some of the most progressive and most conservative clergy in Latin America, it is an important mobilizer of poor people, as are unions and neighborhood associations.

The recent mobilization of women in Brazil is non-feminist in origin.²⁴ Working class women, particularly in Sao Paulo, began organizing after the Second World War, more or less parallel with urban labor unions. Their demands related to the immediate hardships they felt as housewives and coincided with similar neighborhood organizations of middle class women. The cost of living was their primary concern.²⁵

According to Leni Silverstein,²⁶ the current Brazilian women's movement emerged in 1975 under the protection of the Brazilian Women's Center (CMB). Political repression was still severe in Brazil at that time, but U. N. sponsorship of the International Women's Year allowed for the organization of women's groups when other political activity was discouraged. Another strong current at that time was the amnesty movement. The women in the Brazilian Committee for Amnesty tried to pressure the government to declare amnesty for those Brazilians forced into exile for their alleged subversive, anti-government activities. Because of the cover provided by IWY, Church and leftist political groups appropriated many women's organizations, making it difficult for them to approach issues of personal politics: sexuality, violence against women, or birth control.

The year 1978 marked the beginning of a political opening in Brazil that allowed underground and latent political groups to surface. It also marked the initiation of amnesty for most of the political exiles, who began returning from Europe in early 1979. New neighborhood associations again were formed with the "abertura" in 1978, but this time in the satellite industrial cities of the major manufacturing centers. Some of the organizations emerged spontaneously. Others had church or party-sponsorship. The women in these organizations, although using many of the same issues and tactics of the earlier associations, were definitely

working class. Their demands stemmed from the immediate needs of reproduction of the labor force--their day-to-day needs as housewives and mothers--and early organization focused first on day care. These experiences helped the women gain both organizing experience and tactical expertise that later made them more political. A twin strategy of demands for services for their neighborhoods and political education emerged. Political education included support for unions when strike activities began in 1978.²⁷

It was through education that the cross-class links with the socialist women's organizations were made. These groups provided expertise and techniques, allowing the neighborhood groups to deal both with general concerns and with women's concerns. But there was also a hesitance of becoming too militantly feminist. Even though oppression due to gender was very blatant in these neighborhoods, open recognition of this gender oppression was threatening to the women activists. The groups, therefore, focused on communication with their husbands, in order that their husbands might better value what the women did and so that there could be agreement on social issues. These working class organizations resisted the feminist label, as did many of the intermediary middle class intellectual groups working with them.

The women's groups seeking out linkages with Church and union groups focused on women's issues (as distinct from feminist issues). These included such things as maternity leave, equal pay for equal work, and day care. These issues, however, do not form a central core of either Church or union goals and thus linkages attempted were weak.

The returning exiles had a much more feminist stance, stemming from their European experiences and reflections. Often they found themselves doubly disadvantaged in Europe as foreigners and as women. They felt that the CMB in various parts of the country had compromised women's issues for political alliances. Silverstein reports one instance that led to a split in the women's movement.

A proposal to debate the complexities of abortion and family planning issues in Brazil was defeated by the CMB as contrary to their political objectives, which conceived of Catholic Church alliances as more fundamental than the raising of sex-related issues. The outrage provoked by this denial to deal with such an obviously crucial women's problem led to the first of many internal divisions within the women's movement; in this case, it led to the creation of an explicitly feminist group called the Coletivo de Mulheres do Rio de Janeiro (Women's Collective of Rio de Janeiro), a group of women who angrily separated from the CMB.²⁸

The feminist response was to deal with feminist issues in cross-class efforts dominated by middle class and intellectual women. Attempts to create "woman space" were made in the form of casa da mulher (women's

houses) and SOS Mulher groups that help battered and raped women. (SOS--Save Our Ship--is the international call for help used by the organizer to indicate the urgency of the needs to which the organization is responding.) These responses to violence against women seem to have met a real need among all Brazilian women and are growing rapidly in number and strength.

Women's studies is also strong in Brazil, centered in Fundacao Carlos Chagas. This research has a feminist stance as well. Marxist intellectuals such as Heleieth I. B. Saffioti²⁹ are also seriously addressing women's issues.

In Brazil, there are attempts to coordinate the various women's movements both by area and by class. There is frustration in such linkages, but Schmink is hopeful about the continuing potential for the Coordination (Coordinating Committee) of Sao Paulo women's groups. The tactic for grass roots organization involves residential propinquity and common problems stemming from women's reproductive roles within the family unit. Women as workers are not a focus of the organization, nor are they well-represented in union structures. While the middle class women who form coalitions with the working class groups among themselves seriously question the male appropriation of both female labor and, to a growing degree, female sexuality, the short term goals of the working class women are to simply become better able to carry out their traditional roles in a more responsive state and a more equitable economic system.

Silverstein, an active participant in the Rio feminist movement, is not sanguine about the movement's future. She sees a series of contradictory forces, including anti-feminism in the Catholic Church and anti-intellectualism among activists coupled with complex familial and political alliances making the development of coherent feminist theory on which to base action very difficult. Perhaps linkages with more developed socialist feminist movements in other parts of Latin America may provide a solution to some of the dilemmas present.

PERU

Peru, like Brazil, has recently emerged from a period of military dictatorship. Like Brazil, women began organizing in 1975 under the umbrella of IWY. Unlike Brazil, however, the neighborhood movements had a mixed female and male leadership. Further, in contrast to the separation from the state in Brazil, the Peruvian neighborhood organizations were institutionally linked with the Velasco government between 1968 and 1975. The early Velasco period also encouraged the mobilization of idealistic and radicalized middle class young women to work within revolutionary state entities to bring about radical changes in social structure, economic relationships, and political groupings. And, unlike Brazil, there has never been an organized feminist movement in Peru, although Peru can claim several noteworthy feminists as native daughters, and leading leftist politicians, such as Jose Carlos Mariategui, came out

for women's rights in the 1930s.³⁰ As Chaney points out, "Without any notable agitation for suffrage on their part, Peruvian women were handed the vote (in 1955) in the hope that they would help elect a conservative successor to General Manuel Odria."³¹

In Peru, the initial new feminist movement, begun in 1971, has grown and developed like a Hydra. The first was a group of intellectuals named Flora Tristan after a French socialist feminist of Peruvian parentage and organized by a Scandinavian woman married to a Peruvian. They published articles in a newly expropriated newspaper, Expreso. Action for the Liberation of Peruvian Women (ALIMUPER) was organized in 1973 and became public with a feminist demonstration against the Miss Peru Contest at the Sheraton Hotel. As time progressed, the first Flora Tristan folded and, split by the controversy of gender versus class, ALIMUPER divided into two groups.

Inspired by IWY, an official organization for women, the National Commission for Peruvian Women (CONAMUP), was formed by the Velasco government to unite neighborhood, professional, and union women's organization. While subordinate to government policy, that policy included at least verbal recognition of the need to integrate women into productive labor, the educational system, and health services. Although the progressive stance toward women on the part of government was sharply cut back after the fall of Velasco in 1975, IWY continued to legitimize women organizing for women.

The feminist movement began making public waves soon after 1975 on the issue of abortion, which it demanded be free on demand. This was a rather remarkable issue in a country where birth control was not available to poor women, but it served as an initial first step to unify women to take to the streets. Nevertheless, while abortion quickly united the early feminist groups toward mass action, it also divided them again. The less radical feminist groups saw abortion as an inappropriate tactic, given the other necessities facing women, especially poor women. For moderates, birth control, in combination with other women-related health and legal services, became the tactical demand and the organizing focus. A number of confessional Catholic feminist groups were in disagreement with either abortion or birth control as a strategy of the women's movement, and this view was shared by most women in the neighborhood associations. The groups were divided on questions of tactics as well as issues.³²

The economic crisis of 1977-1979, coupled with the prospect of the first presidential election in seventeen years, stimulated the growth of political parties and women's organizations. Many were auxiliaries of political parties, but others took on an independent feminist line. Further, a series of strikes in professions dominated by women, public school teachers, and government employees, caused a shift from the view of women as passive to active participants in societal change.

In 1979, two books by feminists were published, To Be A Woman in Peru³³ and Chastity Belt,³⁴ that were immediate best sellers. They focused primarily, although not entirely, on the lives of middle class women in the sexist structure of Peruvian society. Their high sales indicated the growth of the feminist movement, based, as were the lives of the authors of the two books, on the frustrations of political participation. The Peruvian economy was in desperate shape, including large social welfare cutbacks imposed by the International Monetary Fund as a condition of loans. The jobs that were cut back were mostly those of women, and the services cut back were those aimed toward women.

Groups of leftist women began to get together, often as a result of their previous unsatisfactory experiences as women in leftist parties. Some, such as the Movement Manuela Ramos looked at their own experience in light of feminist theory and Marxist Leninism and tried to unite their new understanding with effective feminist action with the poor women of Lima. Others, such as the Flora Tristan Center (a new group formed in 1979 honoring the same early socialist feminist who linked the oppression of women and the oppression of the working class), were more scholarly in nature. They began by taking a serious look at the small amount of research related to women in Peru to see what links should be made with poor women. This scholarship was almost entirely outside the University structure. A third line, exemplified by Peru/Woman, less socialist in analysis and denying a feminist label, although certainly sharing the precepts of the other groups regarding class exploitation and imperialist dominance, sought outside funding both to carry out research on women's needs and to go to the pueblos jovenes (new towns) or squatter settlements surrounding Lima to teach the women there to defend women's rights.

All of the groups described above, and other more militant ones, sought links to working class groups. ALIMUPER organized marches in favor of abortion, against the mystification and commercialization of Mother's Day, and in favor of the hunger strike by women workers of the teachers' union, SUTEP. Feminist Militancy (MIFE) attempted to have a rewritten family code included in the new Peruvian constitution that was written by a Constituent Assembly between July 1978 and July 1979 (an attempt that met with quite limited success). The Socialist Front of Women (FSM) stressed the importance of the Peruvian socioeconomic setting on the position of women. They attempted to set up Control Committees in working class barrios both to control the price of food in the face of speculators and to teach, through apprenticeship, practical politics in relation to public authorities. They also participated in the Mother's Day march of 1980, focusing their protests against the high prices of food and the low salaries of their husbands.

The groups at first were intent on bringing to poor women the fruits of their feminist socialist consciousness gradually. As they began entering the pueblos jovenes, however, they began to realize the contradictions in their goals. Peru is a country where social class and ethnicity/race are closely intertwined (a phenomenon also found in Brazil, where it has been difficult to form alliances between the white middle

class feminist and the black working class women in the Rio slums or favelas). As in Brazil, domestic servants are the most repressed. These women are (1) racially distinct (Indian in Peru, Black in Brazil) with class and race in close conformity, and (2) provide the household labor that lets middle class women have free time to organize. The women in Peru's pueblos juvenes had long experience with politicians and missionaries coming in with programs and campaigns to "save" the women. Thus, they were hesitant to participate with a new group, particularly one not offering free food or clothing. Further, although the women were badly treated by their men, survival meant maintaining at least a veneer of family unity.

The socialist feminist groups are loosely coordinated through an organized council called the Feminine Organizations Coordinating Committee, formed in June 1979. It includes Manuela Ramos, ALIMUPER, Flora Tristan, Women in Struggle, and the Women's Socialist Front. The motivation to come together was an internationalist one unrelated to women's issues; they sought to focus public support on the Nicaraguan revolution which triumphed on July 19, 1979. At first separately, and then together, the groups reformulated their strategy from one of attempting to "give" poor women what the feminists thought they needed to one of trying to respond to the expressed needs of the poor women themselves, who at times were even in conflict with the ideals of the feminist group.

The Movement Manuela Ramos, for example, got a small grant from a European foundation to teach women's groups non-traditional occupational skills, such as plumbing. The women in the pueblo juvenes expressed absolutely no interest, despite the better pay and security such jobs afforded. Instead, they wanted to reaffirm their femininity through sewing classes that allowed them to work for multinational corporations at home on a putting-out basis, but with none of the social security benefits accorded workers in the formal sector. The Movement Manuela Ramos decided to combine these skills with a bit of machine repair (necessary to keep the sewing going), some health information, and a strong emphasis on sexuality. Sexuality has been extremely popular among working class women, as norms of female modesty enforced by male sexual dominance left them in almost total ignorance of the functioning of their own bodies.

Peru/Woman found that women were active in the daily activities of the neighborhood associations but were not in leadership positions. They organized a series of workshops where women with leadership potential were trained on how to work with their organization, as well as how to deal with problems in their homes and in their neighborhoods. The response was outstanding.

The Flora Tristan Center, joining forces with ALIMUPER and Creativity and Change (an organization which publishes women's inexpensive literature in a popular format), opened a women's center in the heart of Lima. They also developed courses of study and action aimed mostly at women who will

work with grass roots women's groups in order to help them analyze their problems as well as offer something practical to the women in the pueblos juvenes.

The Peruvian groups have had a difficult economic situation with which to contend. The greatest danger they face may be spreading themselves too thin and not evaluating the action they undertake in terms of their socialist feminist goals. Nevertheless, bridging of the large gap of social class has begun among women, and coordination of the efforts to do so is underway. By maintaining autonomous organizations, they have influenced the thinking of a number of political parties that are now willing to state that women are oppressed because of their gender and to propose policies to respond to that oppression.

A women's studies class--Sociology of Women--was introduced at the Catholic University in Lima and, in June 1982, Peru/Woman co-sponsored a women's studies conference with that prestigious university. (The university officials, according to Jeannine Anderson de Velasco, were disturbed to see the program was all women, so some men were added to the program.)

The women's movement in Peru currently includes advocates of women's rights, feminism, and women's auxiliary groups of leftist parties and the progressive church. However, the growth of socialist feminism as a legitimate mode of political analysis as well as a method of mobilizing women in their own self interest is increasing. Virginia Vargas, in a visit to U. S. campuses in February 1982, explained how abortion recently again became a feminist issue, but one linked with class oppression. A 16-year old peasant girl was jailed because of her participation in a rural land invasion. In jail, she was gang raped by six policemen and left pregnant. Demonstrating in favor of abortion in the case of rape allowed mobilization for a women's cause that crossed class lines. This approach to feminism--some issues class specific, others crossing class lines--will be stressed in the 1983 meeting of feminists in Lima.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In the Dominican Republic, there was no feminist organization before the mid-1970s. Women were more likely to be organized by the right wing. The country is small and relatively poor in terms of GNP and national control of natural resources. A history of internal political repression was reinforced by a U. S. military invasion in 1965. Women were active in leftist parties in opposition to right-wing rule. Both the Church and political parties have organized grassroots women's groups. Thus, in many ways, the Dominican Republic parallels Peru in pre-conditions for a class-oriented feminist movement, although the U. S. military invasions made imperialism ever more of an issue.

A bourgeois feminine movement has existed in the Dominican Republic since the 1930s. Established by the dictator Rafael Leonides Trujillo Molina, a mulatto of middle class origin, Dominican Feminist Action (AFD)

was established to lend feminine support to the tyranny, through an ideological superstructure that glorified women's place and the status quo. The movement had family and moral concerns at its center, equating equilibrium of the home to equilibrium of the nation.³⁵ The activities of AFD included works of charity, schools of "domestic education," a prize for women who had the most children, and a campaign to get the vote for women. The AFD was made up of society ladies, intellectuals, public employees, as well as the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of government officials, primarily those in the military.³⁶ As a reward for their loyal support of the dictatorship, Trujillo awarded women the right to vote in 1942. They returned the favor in the 1942 election, confirming his tenure in office.

One of Trujillo's chief lieutenants was Joaquin Balaguer, who was duly installed in 1961 as a replacement for Trujillo after Trujillo's assassination. In the first presidential vote after his installation in December 1961, Juan Bosch of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) was elected President. He undertook a number of economic and political reforms and was overthrown by the military, supported by the Pentagon, the C. I. A., and sugar interests.³⁷ In April 1965, an invasion force of 42,000 U. S. Marines put down a popular uprising attempting to reinstate the democratically elected government of Juan Bosch.³⁸ Balaguer was then elected president, supported by right-wing elements of the military. Like Trujillo, Balaguer saw the utility of organizing women.³⁹ The first years of the Balaguer government were very repressive and, to balance this, personalistic welfare services and major public works were initiated. Women played a key role in this operation. In February 1972, the Crusade of Love was officially founded to work for educational and legal reform within the existing system. While the AFD performed primarily individual acts of charity and educated women for their domestic roles, the Crusade began collective programs for poor women in Mothers' Centers, Women's Training Programs, and certain health services and made donations of food and clothing. The Crusade, led primarily by elite and middle class women, served to legitimize the dominant ideology by providing a public sphere for women performing their "private" role of mother. The final acts of the Crusade were to mobilize large groups of women to march to re-elect Balaguer in 1978. (He lost the election and the Crusade disbanded.)

The feminine movement in the Dominican Republic, more than in either Brazil or Peru, was closely linked to maintaining the government in power, while seeking isolated acts of reform to better the situation of bourgeois women within the existing political and economic dynamic. Linkages were made with newly formed grassroots women's groups to mobilize them for the current strong man in power. As in other countries in Latin America, representatives of these traditional and elitist groups are integrated into the Interamerican Commission of Women (CIM).

While the parties in power mobilized the bourgeois and some working class and peasant women in support of the status quo by emphasizing their traditional roles, Dominican leftist women fought the government side by

side with their male leftist comrades. Concerned with political change and social justice for the poor, these women suffered the same type of imprisonment that the men did.

The repression began to ease after 1976, and political parties on the left were officially allowed to form. Women activists sought an equal role in these organizations. To their surprise, they found themselves at the margins of these movements for which they had fought so hard. The men in charge systematically told them that their increasing concern for the problems of women was divisive to the class struggle. Groups of radical women began getting together, some as early as 1976, to try to work out theoretically the links between the current political struggle for economic justice and the demands of women as part of the oppressed group. At the same time, non-feminist women of more moderate stripe were working with church groups of peasant and worker women, attempting to help them to meet their self-defined needs.

These progressive Church groups initiated a number of programs aimed at poor women, undertaking Paulo Freire-type educational programs on topics such as nutrition. (In contrast to the traditional extension approach that blames the victim for not eating correctly, the women examined the social and economic causes of the women's children's deplorable nutritional status.) Such consciousness raising ultimately led the poor women themselves to begin to reflect on their status not only as poor people, but also as women.

A number of intermediary groups, engaged in traditional programs with grassroots women's groups, began to question their work as a result of these mutual reflections. Groups of intellectual women, spearheaded by the University Committee of Women (CUM) in Santo Domingo and formed during International Women's Year in 1975, began to feel the need to reach out beyond their theoretical considerations to put their ideas into practice. Two of the most outstanding groups that attempted to combine theory with practice were the Center of Research for Feminist Action (CIPAF) and the Feminist Action (AF). They grew out of the tradition of popular education and aim to raise the twin questions of oppression of gender and class within the current Dominican situation. In 1974 it was stated in a publication of the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA):

The lack of a genuine theory of feminine oppression, a coherent body of ideas to link to the specific oppression of women as a sex to the aspirations of exploited classes in general, has frustrated the task of politically conscious women of the Left. Radical feminism has been submerged in the activities of the Dominican Left, where male chauvinism still has a hold.⁴⁰

While by 1982 the description of the Dominican Left as chauvinistic was still accurate to a large degree, the lack of theory on gender-class oppression had been corrected.

The new socialist feminist groups sought to train concerned intermediary groups to deal with the organizing and conscientizing questions that arose in their work. They undertook a series of workshops to do so,

collaborating with the newly formed Women's Section of the Dominican Center for Educational Studies (CEDEE). They worked with intermediate groups that sought to mobilize poor women to act to benefit themselves on a political level. They can be contrasted to the majority of groups working with poor women in the Dominican Republic (and there are many) that seek either (1) the twin purposes of individual mobility/better employees for multinational corporations in the zonas francas (free trade zones) or for domestic service or (2) to use groups of women to better spread knowledge about how to improve the performance of women's traditional roles within the home.

Grassroots groups that have worked for several years to raise consciousness about economic and political exploitation have come to define the liberation⁴¹ they desire as including the liberation of women. They see this not so much in militantly confronting men (some still hesitate to confront problems of the appropriation of women's sexuality), but in educating men as to the worth of the labor women actually do, so as to give women more value within their community. That consciousness raising has interacted with the development of theory of the feminist socialist groups, who are now seeking to recapture the strengths of women's culture within the Dominican Republic.

Income generation in a time of high inflation is an area that both brings women together at a grassroots level and separates them from a program of broader political action. Thus, AF determined that it will do its neighborhood organizing only with women who are already employed--who have to a degree solved the problem of income generation--so that they can focus on their problems as women and as workers without having to deal with the ever-looming problem of providing sustenance for their families.

The Dominican Republic is impressive both for the development of socialist feminism and the large number of projects undertaken by grassroots women's groups. No other country in Latin America has such a high degree of organization and social class diversity in its women's movement. Perhaps because the Dominican Republic, like Brazil and Peru, is undergoing a period of critical alignment at this historical moment, the women's question is being added in a decisive fashion to the problematic of change.

CHILE

While the three countries described above are emerging from periods of political repression, Chile still suffers strong political repression ten years after a military coup deposed democratically elected Salvador Allende and his socialist Popular Unity government in September 1973. Although Chile has had a history of a feminist movement,⁴² it was practically dissolved when women got the right to vote. During the Popular Unity government, 1970-1973, many women were mobilized by right wing forces in a destabilization plan to bring down the government.⁴³ During the years of the major social reforms, from 1964 to 1973, both

under the Christian Democrats and later Popular Unity, activist women in favor of social change joined forces with leftist political parties to structure a new society. They did so as leftists, not feminists, and thus women's issues were left out of the strategy of building a new, more just, society.

The post-1973 repression forced many women activists into exile. The comparative advantage-free enterprise economic model imposed by the Pinochet regime sharply increased unemployment. Women were especially hard hit, and feminism again began to surface in the Chilean setting, albeit in different forms.

In Brazil and the Dominican Republic, the Church fed women indirectly into the socialist feminist movement through its long-time work with grassroots groups in general consciousness-raising. In Peru, the Church, to a degree, opposed the feminist movement because of disagreement over abortion and birth control. In Chile the Church became the umbrella under which both the intellectual and the working class socialist feminist could come together and through which union women and neighborhood organizations could meet to discuss issues of common concern.

Further, the long-time democratic tradition in Chile meant that there were more genuine links between the new socialist feminists, who grew out of a militant party background, and the Chilean feminist movement of the early 20th century, which arose in response to both the internal changes of the industrializing Chilean economy and the influence of the international women's movement surrounding the fight for suffrage in Europe and America.⁴⁴ Although the early movement focused on obtaining the right to vote at the national level in 1949,⁴⁵ it made more inroads into the popular classes than did early feminism in the other countries under discussion and was more open to confronting male-female problems as well as problems of inequalities in the legal code and in educational opportunities. Leftist women were early involved in such organizations as the Movement in Favor of the Emancipation of Women (MEMCH), organized in 1935.

Despite the strong and multi-class history of feminism in Chile, the feminist movement began to decline after 1949 as women moved from female organizations into political parties.⁴⁶ With a growing liberal tide in the country, the leftist and Christian Democratic parties themselves convinced the women who joined them that women's issues should wait until the real social, political and economic problems were solved. Only when it was clear that there was no chance for general social, political, or economic betterment under the repressive and elitist-oriented government of Pinochet would women again focus on the women's concerns as matters of immediate preoccupation.

Despite the Chilean government's distrust of the 1975 International Women's Year, that international focus on women gave rise to concern for Chilean women by both exiles and women at home. That many influential Chilean exiles were in feminist circles in Europe helped begin a return to feminist socialist consciousness in Chile itself. As early as 1976,

small groups of intellectual women began meeting to deal with both their personal problems as women in a deteriorating economic and political situation and with the theoretical underpinnings of economic, class, and gender oppression. By May 1979, one group was ready to go public, and the first meeting of the unofficial Circle for the Study of the Condition of Women (?) was held in Santiago. An enthusiastic crowd of over 200 people attended as the theoretical positions formulated and the links with union women and the previous feminist movement were celebrated. The major document of that meeting ended with a call to "comply with our obligations to take consciousness, to study, to participate and to show solidarity. We believe that is our, and only our, responsibility to demand that women receive their rights. If we do not fight for ourselves, no one will fight for us."⁴⁷

The Circle was eventually recognized as an official study group under the Academy for Christian Humanism. Six workshops were formed of from twenty to fifty women each to deal with (1) women and work, (2) ideology and mass communications, (3) the legal condition of women, (4) women and health, (5) cultural and artistic diffusion, and (6) politics and history--that is, the formation of a feminist consciousness. Unlike the research on women in Latin America discussed by Navarro,⁴⁸ this work is definitely feminist as well as concerned about the issue of class exploitation and economic dependency.

The Circle also cooperated with working class women's groups in organizing mass meetings of women to discuss their rights and possibilities under the current regime. Most recently, they have become involved in the problems and organization of domestic workers, dealing with the contradictions of being both employers and organizers.

The Circle defined itself primarily as academic. Yet, as in other Latin American countries, learning about the situation of poor women almost requires one to try to act in some way to better their condition. Here again, the links with the Church are crucial.

A large number of emergency measures were instituted after the 1973 coup as the right-wing radical economic "solution" for Chile closed factories and shut off public welfare programs. The Church stepped into the ever-widening gap of human services, always seeing this participation as short term until the situation somehow regained its former equilibrium. That equilibrium, after nearly ten years, appears to mean a steadily deteriorating condition for the poor. Thus, the Church and other private social welfare programs, that primarily involve women, are beginning to realize that they must rethink their strategies and replan their tactics. Women from the Circle, who initially wanted to enter the urban slums and peasant organizations to make the participants feminists, are now entering the slums and working with peasants and workers to meet their self-defined needs, that may include, but are not limited to, raising feminist issues and understanding. Sexuality, as in the other countries, has proved a meaningful topic for education and cross-class communication. The Circle

is working with several of the action groups in the Vicariate of Solidarity to help them use participant research techniques to evaluate their methods of working with poor women in the present situation of severe political repression. Right-wing anti-feminist groups, however, also maintain their links to working class workers, particularly through such organizations as mothers' clubs.

CONCLUSIONS

In a number of Latin American countries women have responded to economic dependency and political repression and their aftermath by organizing to (1) analyze the implications of oppression by class and by gender where dependent capitalism is the dominant economic force, and (2) guided by that analysis, organize autonomous socialist feminist groups that can work with grassroots, non-feminist women's groups in order to help them meet their immediate daily needs and arrive at a deeper analysis of their situation as women and as members of an exploited class. The four cases discussed attempt to show how socialist feminism emerged to varying degrees in a variety of settings in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The countries of Latin America all differ in terms of their economic, political, and social histories. While there is the impetus of a worldwide focus on women, stimulated by the International Women's Year, and later the International Women's Decade, the forms that feminism took in Latin America vary according to country setting. As demonstrated by the 1981 meeting of feminists in Bogota, however, women in Latin America and the Caribbean have a great deal in common. Feminism seems to blossom and seek working class ties in situations where there has been organized class struggle. Experience in political parties, coupled with the international input of political exiles, helps build a socialist feminist base. But, until there is some opening in repressive political structures, even as small as the cover provided by the Church in Chile, an activist feminist movement cannot emerge. Thus, for example, in Argentina there are several feminist (but not socialist) organizations of middle class intellectual women--which are carefully avoided by most of the best-known scholars in that country who are undertaking important studies of women that focus on class as the major issue. One feminist Argentine group organized a regional encounter of feminists in October 1980, which was summarily shut down by the Argentine military police.

In Colombia and Mexico, small socialist feminist groups exist which are seeking ties with working class groups, primarily through offering services and workshops. There is a beginning of such a movement in Ecuador. In Bolivia, strong working class and peasant women's organizations exist which focus on class issues and which have no feminine middle class link (due in part to the systematic decimation of the left by the various right-wing military dictatorships). In Cuba, through the Federation of Cuban women, and in Nicaragua through AMNLAE, women are organized. But, despite working quietly behind the scenes to better the situation of women within the new revolutionary situations, such groups eschew a feminist label as divisive when national survival is at stake.

The movements described, as well as the emergent feminist socialist movements in Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador have a number of things in common. Organizing for women as a specific category within other oppressed groups was stimulated by the 1975 International Women's Year conference in Mexico City and further mobilized by the mid-decade meeting in Copenhagen. The publicity surrounding the Mexico meeting, since it was held in Latin America, focused the attention of governments and citizens on the position of women within each country. Similarly, in all the countries in which socialist feminism is emerging, much effort and study is going into establishing cross-class organizational ties. And in all the countries, such ties are both initially aided and ultimately hindered by early grassroots organization and conscientization by the Catholic Church. Nuns in particular managed to bring women together to talk of their problems and the causes and potential solutions to them. In all the countries where feminist socialist movements are springing up, consciousness raising meant first dealing with underdevelopment--a structural condition caused both by class relationships, but primarily by neo-colonial economic relationships with the center countries of the world system--extreme and visible poverty, constant struggles for democracy against strong forms of political oppression, and a state focusing first on national security and second on development, generally ignoring women's issues.

The movements differ greatly as to context. The degree of political repression varies from relatively mild in the Mexican state, where a mode of cooptation within the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) means repression is much more selective, to Argentina where harsh semi-official repression, represented by a large and growing number of "disappeared persons," creates a psychology of fear making cross-class alliances particularly risky. Currently in Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia, there are elections and relative openness, but the potential for jail and worse is recognized by all involved in critical politics. In Brazil, the political opening, while much greater than in the past, is still fragile, with a potential for increased political repression always present, particularly related to the growing labor activism for economic justice. In Chile, repression is strong, and even the small opening provided by the Church for social welfare measures is constantly vulnerable to being shut, making large-scale organizing, particularly under a socialist label, an impossibility.

The economic situation of world-wide inflation and economic stagnation is forcing women in Latin America to become more aware of the structures that influence their families' well-being, as well as to seek alternative forms of income. Yet the focus of this activity related to working class women organizing depends to a great degree on the economic base existent in each country. In Brazil, where industrialization is more wide-spread than in other Latin American countries, support for union activity is a key agenda item for socialist feminist groups. While the groups in other countries support strike activity when the opportunity exists, the lower level of industrialization and the more precarious economic situations, particularly in Peru, means a focus on the informal sector and income

generation as part of the organizational mix. For all the groups, it has become clear that they must deal with working class women's immediate needs as well as build organization and levels of consciousness. Further, it is clear that consciousness as well as immediate needs are closely linked to social class position. The common theme of recognition and understanding women's sexuality, however, has proved a powerful vehicle for organization and education in all of the countries discussed.

Latin American countries suffer from underdevelopment and are disadvantaged in the world system. Class problems are still serious in almost all as well. Ethnic and racial barriers confound the class lines in many situations. Male dominance limits women in all situations and in all social classes, despite enormous variation among different groups of women. Despite the differences, there is a strong sense of internationalism among the socialist feminists in Latin America. They seek to learn from each other's practical experiences and share their theoretical developments as they build autonomous organizations. And they are developing innovative patterns of networking to carry out these goals. International Women's Decade has proved a catalyst in this process.

Carroll, among others, has faulted socialist feminists for the lack of "a true analytical synthesis."⁴⁹ Perhaps that synthesis is more likely to come through the praxis of Latin American social feminists groups than from the theoretical analysis of women's studies centers. This article has not dealt specifically with the specific theoretical content of the socialist feminist groups described. Rather, the very nature of these groups requires a dialectical methodology and a theoretical fluidity that should provide new insights for North American scholars and activists.

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GLOSSARY OF LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

pp. 18, 19	AF	Feminist Action--Accion Feminina
pp. 16, 17	AFD	Dominican Feminist Action--Accion Feminista Dominicana
pp. 13, 14, 15	ALIMUPER	Action for the Liberation of Peruvian Women--Accion para la Liberacion de la Mujer Peruana
pp. 3, 22	AMNLAE	Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women--Asociacion de Mujeres Nicaraguenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza
p. 15	CCOF	Feminine Organizations Coordinating Committee--Comite Coordinator de Organizaciones Femininas. Within CCOF are: pp. 14, 15--Manuela Ramos (also Movement Manuela Ramos)--Movimiento Manuela Ramos; pp. 13, 14, 15--ALIMUPER; p. 13, 15--Flora Tristan; p. 15--Women in Struggle--Mujeres en Lucha; and pp. 14, 15--FSM
p. 19	CEDEE	Dominican Center for Educational Studies--Centro Dominicana de Estudio Educacionales
p. 3	CEDES	Center for the Study of State and Society--Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad
p. 17	CIM	Interamerican Commission of Women--Comision Interamericana de la Mujer
p. 18	CIPAF	Center of Research for Feminist Action--Centro de Investigacion y Accion Feminista
p. 10, 11	CMB	Brazilian Women's Center--Centro da Mulher Brasileira
p. 13	CONAMUP	National Commission for Peruvian Women--Comision Nacional de Mujeres Peruanas
p. 12		Coordinating Committee--Coordination
p. 15		Creativity and Change--Creatividad y Cambio
p. 18	CUM	University Committee of Women--Comite de Mujeres Universitarias

p. 3	FMLN	Faribundo Marti Front for National Liberation-- Frente Faribundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional
pp. 14, 15	FSM	Socialist Front of Women--Frente Socialista de Mujeres
p. 3	GRECMU	Research Group for the Study of the Conditions of Uruguayan Women--Grupo de Estudios sobre las Condiciones de la Mujer Uruguayana
pp. 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 23	IWY	International Women's Year
P. 20	MEMCH	Movement in Favour of the Emancipation of Women--Movimiento por Emancipacion de la Mujer Chilena
p. 14	MIFE	Feminist Militancy--Militancia Feminista
pp. 18, 27 p. 14, 15, 16	NACLA	North American Congress on Latin America Peru/Woman--Peru/Mujer
p. 17	PRD	Dominican Revolutionary Party--Partido Revolu- cionario Dominicano
p. 23	PRI	Institutionalized Revolutionary Party--Partido Revolucionario Institucional
p. 12		SOS Mulher groups--SOS Woman
p. 14	SUTEP	Legitimate Union of Workers in Peruvian Educa- tion--Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Educacion del Peru
p. 4	UNESCO	United Nations Economic and Social Council

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