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**MARXISM, MARIÁTEGUI  
AND  
THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT**



**A Document  
of  
Communist Party of Peru**

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*WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!*

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

*Surpassing number of bends in the road, the People's War in Peru is continuing since more than twenty years under the glorious leadership of Communist Party of Peru [PCP]. For the first time in the international communist movement, under the leadership of Chairman Gonzalo, it is the Party that scientifically analysed, explained and stubbornly upholds Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism, at present as the guiding principle of revolutionary proletariat of all countries. Upholding Maoism, PCP had built up People's Army, base areas and initiated People's War in 1980. The impact of this People's War can be well understood from the fact that despite capturing Chairman Gonzalo in 1992 and Comrade Feliciano – the chief of PCP after Comrade Gonzalo's arrest – in 1999 and by keeping them into two separate underground cells at a naval base without allowing anyone to meet them and putting them into complete isolation, Fujimori, then the President of Peru as well as the present President Tolaredo could not contain the People's War. Consequently, Fujimori has to flee from the country. As the President of Peru, he had gone to Japan in a state-visit and there he had asked for the citizenship of Japan under the pretext that he is having a Japanese ancestor and stayed there. Very recently, immediately after the US's Afghan War the US-President Bush's Peru visit was also marked with massive violent demonstration and protest in the capital Lima itself.*

*PCP, a participant-member of Revolutionary Internationalist Movement [RIM], is always holding high the red banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Communist Internationalism.*

*Apart from other aspects that made PCP a strong Maoist Party that continuously is standing stubbornly and bravely against the US-backed local reaction and narcotic-warfare organised and executed by the US and disguised deployment of the US-army; one of the major aspect is PCP's position on women and particularly the application of its policy on women. Consequently, at the level of Central Committee of PCP, even numerically, women have already become a significant force. During the Days of Heroism, the women war-prisoners of Callao Women's Prison had set an example of how in the quest of actual emancipation of Woman can fight against the system that tries to subdue Her, crush Her by staunchly and ardently upholding correct political and ideological position.*

*We are happily publishing this document of PCP with this hope that assimilating the vital lessons from such a distinguishable document, the Indian Maoist Revolutionaries would take their movement to a qualitative height.*



**José Carlos Mariátegui**  
(1895 – 1930)

**José Carlos Mariátegui**, had founded the Communist Party of Peru in 1928 and died at the age of only 35 years. Shortly before his death, he led the Party in affiliating with the Third Communist International of Lenin and Stalin. When the Party became revisionist, Mariátegui's teachings – the basis of the Party – were kept aside.

During the period of the *Great Debate* between Mao's CPC and revisionist CPSU, the ideological issues that came up in the forefront as well as the revolutionary upsurges in Peru, the revolutionary section of the PCP had taken up the study of Mariátegui's teachings to settle the political and ideological line of the Party, the basic line for the revolution in Peru, its targets and goals and tasks of the Communist revolutionaries.

Under the leadership of Comrade Gonzalo, rebuilding the PCP took 15 years. In 1975, a document "Retomemos a Mariátegui y Reconstituimos Su Partido" [Reclaim Mariátegui and Rebuild His Party] was published by the Central Committee of the PCP under comrade Gonzalo's leadership. The completion of this process was marked by a 1979 Central Committee meeting that approved the initiation and continuation of People's War, which began a year later, i.e., in 1980 and is still continuing throughout the country.

## **MARXISM, MARIÁTEGUI AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT**

### **I. THE WOMAN QUESTION AND MARXISM**

The woman question is an important question for the popular struggle and its importance has become greater today, because actions are intensifying which tend to mobilise women; a necessary and fruitful mobilisation from the working class viewpoint and in the service of the masses of the people, but which promoted by and for the benefit of the exploiting classes, acts as an element which divides and fetters the people's struggle.

In this new period of politicisation of the masses of women in which we now evolve, with its base in a greater economic participation by women in the country, it is indispensable to pay serious attention to the woman question as regards study and research, political incorporation and consistent organisational work. A task which demands to keep in mind Mariátegui's thesis that teaches: "*Women like men, are reactionaries, centerists or revolutionaries, they cannot therefore all fight the same battle side by side in today's human panorama in which class differentiates the individual more than sex.*" That way, from the beginning, the need to understand the woman question scientifically undoubtedly demands that we start from the Marxist concept of the working class.

#### **1. The theory of women as "deficient feminine nature"**

Through the centuries the exploiting classes have maintained and imposed the pseudo-theory of the "deficient feminine nature". It has served to justify the oppression that still women are experiencing in societies by which exploitation continues to prevail. That way, the Jewish men's prayer: "Blessed be God, our Lord and Lord of all the worlds, for not having made me a woman" and conformity by the Jewish women who pray: "Blessed be the Lord, who has created me according to his will," clearly expresses the contempt which the ancient world had for the woman's condition. These ideas were also predominated in Greek slave society. Famous Pythagoras said: "There is a good principle which has created order, light and man and there is a bad principle which has created chaos, darkness and woman". Even the great philosopher Aristotle pronounced: "the female is female by virtue of certain qualitative fault," and "the character of women suffers from a natural defect."

These proposals passed on to the final period of Roman slave society and to the Middle Ages. Christian thinkers intensified the contempt of Woman by imputing Her as being the source of sin and the waiting room of hell. Tertulian claimed: "Woman, you are the door of the devil. You have persuaded Him whom the devil did not dare to attack frontally. By your fault the Son of God had to die; you should always go dressed in mourning and rags". And Augustine of Hipona told: "The woman is a beast who is neither firm, nor stable." While they condemned, others had passed sentence on feminine inferiority and obedience. Thus, Paul of Tarsus, the apostle, preached: "Man was not taken from Woman, but Woman from Man;" and "Just as the church is subject to

Christ, let Woman be submitted in all things to Her Husband". And hundreds of years later, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Aquinas followed with similar preaching: "Man is the head of the Woman, just as Christ is the head of Man" and "It is a fact that Woman is destined to live under the authority of Man and that She has no authority by Herself."

The understanding of the feminine condition did not advance much with the development of capitalism. As Candorcet pointed out its social root when he said: "It has been said that women ... lack a sense of justice, and that they obeyed their feelings rather than their conscience. ... that difference has been caused by education and social existence, not by the nature". The great materialist Diderot wrote: "I feel sorry for you women," and "in all customs, the cruelty of civil laws joined the cruelty of Nature against women. They have been treated as imbeciles". Rousseau, advanced ideologist of the French Revolution, insisted: "All education of women must be relative to that of men.... Woman is made to yield to Man and endure his injustices." This bourgeois position is carried on to the age of imperialism, became more reactionary as time goes on, joined the Christian positions, by reiterating the old theses sanctioned through John 23: "God and Nature have given women various chores, which perfect and complement the chores entrusted to men."

Thus, we see how all through the exploiting classes have preached the "deficient feminine nature." Sustaining their idealist concepts, they have reiterated the existence of "feminine nature", independent of social conditions, which is a part of their anti-scientific "human nature" thesis. However, this so-called "feminine nature," in its eternal and invariable essence, is also called "deficient" to show that the condition of Woman and their oppression and patronage is the result of their "natural inferiority compared to Man." With this pseudo-theory, it is intended to maintain and "justify" the submission of Woman before Man.

Finally, it is convenient to point out that even an outstanding materialist thinker like Democritus had prejudices with respect to women ("A woman familiar with logic: a fearful thing", "Woman is much more prone than the male to think evil!"). Moreover, the defence of women is based in metaphysical or religious arguments (Eve means life and Adam means land; created after Man, Woman was finished better than he was). Even, when the bourgeoisie was a revolutionary class, it only conceived of women in reference to men, not as independent beings.

## 2. The Development of capitalism and the women's movement

With the development of capitalism women are getting incorporated into labour, providing the basis and conditions for them to develop; that way, with their incorporation into the productive process, women are having the opportunity of more directly joining the class struggle and in combative actions. Capitalism carried out the bourgeois revolutions and in this, it forges the feminine masses, especially working women, to be advanced.

The French Revolution, the most advanced one of the revolutions led by the bourgeoisie, was a great nourishment for feminist action. Women were mobilised together with the masses, and participating in the civic clubs, they developed revolutionary actions. In these struggles they organised a "Society of Revolutionary and Republican women," and through Olimpia de Gouges, in 1789 they demanded a "Declaration of the Rights of Woman" and created newspapers like "*The Impatient*" to demand for the improvements in their condition. In the development of the revolutionary process, women won the suppression of the rights of the first born male and the abolition of the masculine privileges, and they also obtained equal rights of succession with males and achieved divorce. Their militant participation rendered some fruits.

But once the great revolutionary push was halted, women were denied access to the political clubs, their politicisation was suppressed and they saw themselves blamed and urged to return to the home, they were told: "Since when has Women been allowed to renounce their sex and become Man? Nature has told Woman: be a Woman. Your chores are to tend to infants, the details of the home and the diverse challenges of motherhood." Even more, with the bourgeois reorganisation initiated by Napoleon, with the Civil Code, a married woman returned to be subjected to patronage, falling under her husband's domain in her person and goods; she is denied the questioning of paternity. Married women, like prostitutes, lost their civil rights and they were denied divorce and the right to transfer their properties.

In the French Revolution we can clearly see how the advance of women and their setbacks are linked to the advances and setbacks of the people and the revolution. This is an important lesson: the identity of interests of the feminist movement and the people's struggles, how the former is part of the latter.

Also this bourgeois revolution shows how the ideas about women follow a process similar to the political process; once the revolutionary upsurge was fought and halted, reactionary ideas re-emerged about women. Bonald maintained: "Man is to Woman as Woman is to a child". Comte, considered as the "father of sociology," proposed that femininity is a sort of continued infancy and that this biological infancy is expressed as intellectual weakness. Balzac wrote: "The destiny of women and their only glory is to make the hearts of men beat. The woman is a property acquired by contract, a mobile personal property, because the possession is worth a title; in all, speaking properly, woman is but an annex to man." All this reactionary ideology is synthesised in the following words by Napoleon: "Nature wanted Women to be our slaves. ... They are our property. ... Woman is but a machine to produce children". A character for whom feminine life should be oriented by "Kitchen, Church, Children," – a slogan endorsed by Hitler in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The French Revolution raised its three principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and promised justice and to meet the demands of the people. Very soon it showed its limits and that its principled declarations were but formal declarations. At the same time, its class interests were counterpoised to those of the masses; misery, hunger and injustice kept on prevailing, except under new forms. Although due to historic conditions the utopians could not reach the root of the evil, but they launched a sharp and demolishing criticism against such an order of things. Utopian socialists also condemned the condition of women under capitalism. Fourier, representing this position, pointed out: "The change of an historical age can always be determined by the progress of Woman ... the degree of emancipation of Woman constitutes the natural path for general emancipation."

Confronted with this great assertion, it is worth to counterpoise the thought of the anarchist Proudhon about women – and keep in mind his ideas, particularly in today's context, when there are attempts to propagate anarchism to the four winds by presenting them as examples of revolutionary vision and consequence. Proudhon maintained that Woman was inferior to Man physically, intellectually and morally, and that represented together numerically, Woman have a value of 8/27 the value of Man. So for this 'hero', Woman represents less than a third of the value of Man, which is but an expression of the petty-bourgeois thought of its author, a root that is common to all anarchists.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with their increasing incorporation into the productive process, women continued to develop their struggle for their own demands joining the workers' unions and revolutionary movements of the proletariat. An example of this participation was Luisa Michel, a fighter at the Paris Commune of 1871. However, the feminist movement, in general, oriented

itself towards suffragism, to the struggle to get the right to vote for women, in pursuit of the false idea that in getting the vote and parliamentary positions, their rights would be respected. These feminist actions were channelised towards parliamentary cretinism. However, it is worth to remember that the right to vote for women was not achieved free – during the last century and the start of this century, women fought openly and determinedly to get it. The struggle for the feminine vote and its achievement show once more that though it was indeed a victory, but it is not the means that allows genuine transformation of the condition of women.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century implies a greater development of the feminist economic action. Women workers increased massively, as well as women employees, to whom were added strong contingents of professionals. Women enter all fields of activities. In this process, World Wars are having significant importance, because they incorporated millions of women into the economy to substitute the men mobilised to the front. All this pushed ahead the mobilisation, organisation and politicisation of women. And starting from 1950s the feminist struggle starts again with greater force, amplified in the 1960s with great perspectives for the future.

In conclusion, through the economic incorporation of women, capitalism sets the basis for their economic autonomy. But capitalism by itself is not capable of giving formal legal equality to women. In no way, it can emancipate them. This has been proven throughout the history of the bourgeoisie – a class that even in its most advanced revolution, the French Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, could not go further than merely a formal declaration of rights. Further, the later development of the bourgeois revolutionary processes and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, show that not only the bourgeoisie is incapable in emancipating the masses of women, but with the development of imperialism the bourgeois concept as regards the feminine condition becomes more reactionary as time goes on and, in fact, confirms the social, economic, political and ideological oppression of women, even when it disguises and paints the women question in myriad ways.

### 3. Marxism and the Emancipation of Women

Marxism, the ideology of the working class, conceives the human being as a set of social relations that change as a function of the social process. Thus, Marxism is absolutely opposed to the thesis of "human nature", as an eternal, immutable reality outside the frame of social conditions; the thesis belongs to idealism and reaction. The Marxist position also implies the overcoming of mechanical materialism (i.e., of the old materialists before Marx and Engels) who were incapable of understanding the historical social character of the human being as a transformer of reality, so irrationally it had to rely upon metaphysical or spiritual conditions, such as in the case of Feuerbach.

As Marxism considers the human being as a concrete reality generated historically by society, it does not accept the thesis of "feminine nature," which is but a complement of the so-called "human nature" and therefore aggravated a reiteration that Woman has an eternal and unchanging nature. And we have already seen that idealism and reaction understand by "feminine nature" as a "deficient and inferior nature" compared to Man.

For Marxism, Woman, as much as Man, are but a set of social relations, historically adapted and changing as a function of the changes of society in its development process. Woman, is a social product, and Her transformation demands the transformation of society.

When Marxism focuses on the woman question, therefore, it does so from a materialist and dialectical viewpoint, from a scientific concept, which indeed allows a complete understanding of the question. In the study, research and understanding of women and their condition, Marxism

treats the woman question with respect to property, family and State, because throughout the history the condition and historical place of women is intimately linked to these three factors.

From this viewpoint, an extraordinary example of concrete analysis of the woman question is seen in *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, by F. Engels, who pointing to the substitution of mother-right by father-right as the start of the submission of women, wrote:

"Thus, the riches, as they went on increasing, on one hand provided Man with a more important position than Woman in the family, and on the other planted in Him the idea of taking advantage of this importance to modify the established order of inheritance for the benefit of His children. ... That revolution — one of the most profound humanity has known — had no need to touch even one of the living members of the gens. All its members could go on being what they had been up to then. It merely sufficed to say that in the future the descendants of the male-line would remain in the gens, but those of the female-line would leave it, going to the gens of their father. That way maternal affiliation and inheritance by mother-right were abolished and replaced by masculine affiliation and inheritance by father-right. We know nothing of how this revolution took place among the cultured peoples, since it took place in prehistoric times. ... **The overthrowing of mother-right was the great historic defeat of the female sex throughout the world. Man also grabbed the reigns of the house; woman saw herself degraded, turned into a servant, into the slave of man's lasciviousness, in a mere instrument of reproduction.**" (*Our emphasis*)

This paragraph by Engels sets the fundamental thesis of Marxism on the woman question: the condition of women is sustained in property relations, in the form of ownership exercised over the means of production and in the production relations arising from them. This thesis of Marxism is extremely important, because it establishes that the oppression attached to the female condition has its roots in the formation, appearance and development of the right of ownership over the means of production, and, therefore, its emancipation is linked to the destruction of the said right. In order to have a Marxist understanding of the woman question, it is indispensable to start from this great thesis. And today when supposed revolutionaries and even self-proclaimed Marxists pretend to have feminine oppression arising not from the formation and appearance of private property, but from the simple division of labour as a function of sex which had attributed less important chores to Woman than those of Man, reducing Her to the sphere of the home, it has got further importance. Despite all the propaganda and efforts to present it as revolutionary, this proposal is but the substitution for the Marxist position on the emancipation of women with bourgeois proposals – which, in essence, are variations of the supposed immutable "feminine nature."

Developing this materialist dialectical starting point, Engels teaches us how on this basis the monogamous family was instituted, about which he says:

"It was the first form of family not based on nature, **but on economic conditions and concretely on the triumph of private property over spontaneously originated, common primitive property.**" And: "Therefore, **monogamy** in no way appears in history as a reconciliation between Man and Woman, and even less as a higher form of marriage. Quite the contrary, it **enters the scene under the form of the enslavement of one sex by the other**, as the proclamation of a war between the sexes, up to then unknown in prehistory." (*Origin ... Our emphasis.*)

After establishing that private property sustains the monogamous family form, which sanctions the oppression of women, Engels establishes the correspondence of the three fundamental forms of marriage with the three great stages of human evolution: savagery and marriage by groups,

barbarism and pairing marriage, civilisation and monogamy "with its complements, adultery and prostitution." That way, the Marxist classics developed the thesis about the historically variable social condition of Woman and Her place in society, pointing out how the feminine condition is intimately linked with private property, the family and the State, which is the apparatus that legalises such relations and imposes and sustains them by force.

The scientific proposition systematised by Engels is a product of the Marxist analysis of the condition of Woman throughout history, and the most elementary study fully corroborated the accuracy and actuality of these proposals, which are the foundation and starting point of the working class for the understanding of the woman question. Let us make a historical recount allowing us to illustrate what Engels and the classics set forth.

In the primitive community, with a natural division of labour, based on age and sex, men and women developed their lives on a spontaneous equality and participation of women in the social group decisions. Later women were surrounded with respect and consideration, a deferential and even privileged treatment. Once riches began to grow, which heightened the position of men in the family, pushing forward the substitution of father-right for mother-right, women began to move to the background and their position deteriorated. Echoes of this reach the times of the great Greek tragic Aeschillus, who in his work *Eumenida*, wrote "It is not mother who engenders that which is called her son; she is only the nurse of the embryo deposited in her womb. Who engenders is the father. The woman receives the seed as a foreign depository, and she preserves it, if so pleases the gods."

Thus, in Greek slave society, the condition of women is that of submission, social inferiority and object of contempt. Of them it is said: "The slave absolutely lacks the freedom to deliberate; woman has it, but in a weak and inefficient manner" (Aristotle); "The best woman is she, of whom men speak the least" (Pericles), and the answer by the husband who investigates public affairs "it's not your thing. Shut up lest I hit you...keep on weaving" (Aristophanes: *Lysistrata*). What power of their tutor, whether the father, the husband, the husband's heir, or the State, their lives passed under constant tutelage. They were provided a marriage-dowry, so they had something on which to live and do not go hungry, and in some cases they were authorised to divorce. For the rest, they were reduced to misogyny in the home and in society under the control of specialised authorities. Women could inherit when there was no direct male heir, in that case she had to marry the oldest relative within the paternal gens; that way she would not inherit directly, but was merely a transferor of inheritance; all to preserve the family property.

The condition of women in Rome, which was also a slave society, allows a better understanding as it was derived from property, family and the State. After the reign of Tarquinius once patriarchal right was set up, private property and therefore the family (gens), became the basis of society: **women would remain subject to patrimony and the family.** She was excluded from every "virile job," and in public affairs, she was "a civil minor" – she was not directly denied inheritance, but was subjected to tutelage. Gaius, the Roman jurist, on this point said: "Tutelage was established in the interest of the tutors themselves, so the woman of whom they are supposed to be heirs cannot wrest their willed inheritance from them, nor impoverish it by alienation or debts." The patrimonial root of the tutelage imposed upon women was, therefore, clearly exposed and established.

After the Twelve Tables, the fact that women belonged to the paternal gens and to the conjugal gens (also strictly for reasons of safeguarding property) generated conflicts which were the basis for the advancement of the Roman "legal emancipation." **The sine manu marriage appears:**

**her goods remain dependent on her tutors and her husband only acquires rights over her person, and at that shared with the pater familias, who retains an absolute authority over his daughter. And the domestic tribunal appears, to resolve discrepancies which may arise between father and husband,** thus the woman can appeal to her father for disagreements with her husband, and vice versa: "it is no longer the matter of the individual."

On this economic basis (her participation in the inheritance, even if it was tutored), and the conflict between the rights of the paternal and conjugal gens for the woman and her goods, despite the legal restrictions, a major participation of Roman women in their society developed: the "atrium" was set up, the centre of the house, which governed work by the slaves, conducted education of the children and influenced them until a rather advanced age. She shared the works and problems of her spouse and was considered as co-proprietor of his goods. She attended parties and on the street, even consulted and magistrates gave her preferential crossing. The weight of Roman women in their society was reflected by the figure of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi.

With the Roman social development, the State displaces the contention among the gens and assumes the disputes about women, divorce, adultery, etc., which went to be heard in public tribunals, abolishing the domestic tribunal. Later, under imperial rule, tutelage on women would be abolished, answering to social and economic demands. Women got a fixed dowry (individual patrimony) which was not to be returned to the agnates (parental relatives) nor belonged to husband, that way she was given an economic base for her independence and development. By the end of the Republic, mothers had been given recognised rights over their children, receiving custody of them due to the father's misconduct or his being placed under tutelage.

Under emperor Marcus Aurelius, in the year 178, a great step was taken in the process of property and family: children were declared heir to their mother in preference to agnates, that way the family was based on a link of consanguinity and the mother emerged as equal to the father before the children, the children also were recognised as children of the wife and derived from the above, the daughter inherited just as her male siblings.

But, while the State "emancipates" women from the family, it submits them to its tutelage and restricts their acts. And simultaneously to the social rise of women, an anti-feminist campaign was initiated in Rome invoking their inferiority, their "imbecility and fragility of the sex" to legally reduce them.

In Rome then, socially women had it better than that in Greece and acquired respect and even greater influence in social life, as shown by the words of Cato: "Everywhere men govern women, and we, who govern all men, are governed by our women." Roman history has outstandingly exalted women – from the Sabines, through Lucretia and Virginia to Cornelia. Criticisms of women, not as women, but as contemporaries, developed by the end of the First and Second centuries of our era. In this way Juvenal reproaches them: lasciviousness, gluttony, to dedicate themselves to manly occupations and their passion for hunting and sports.

Roman society recognised some rights of women, especially the right to property, but did not open to them civil activities and much less public affairs, activities – which the women developed "illegally" and in a restricted way. Due to this reason, Roman matrons ("having lost their ancient virtues") tended to seek other fields to employ their energies.

To consider the feminine situation in the decline of slavery and the development of feudalism, one must keep in mind the influence of Christianity and the Germanic contribution. Christianity contributed quite a bit to the oppression of women. Among the fathers of the church, there was

definite demeaning of women, whom they considered inferior, servants of men and sources of evil. To what has been said let us add the condemnation by St. John Chrisostomus, a saint of the Catholic Church: "No savage beast is as damaging as woman." Under this influence, the advances reached under Roman legislation were at first mitigated and later denied.

Germanic societies based on war gave women a secondary situation due to their smaller physical strength. However, they were respected and had rights which made them an associate of their spouse. Let us remember that on this subject Tacitus wrote: "In peace and in war, She shares His luck, She lives with Him and dies with Him."

Christianity and Germanicism influenced the condition of women under feudalism. Women were in a situation of absolute dependence with respect to the father and husband and by the time of king Clovis "the mundium weighs over her during all her life." Women developed their lives completely submitted to the feudal lord, although protected by the laws "as property of Man and mother of children", **Her value used to increase with fertility, being worth triple of the value of a free man, a value she used to lose if she could no longer bear offspring: woman was a reproductive womb.**

Under feudalism we can see an evolution in the condition of women, in the function of curbing of feudal powers and increase of royal powers, as it had happened in Rome: **the mundium was transferred from the lords to the king**; the mundium became a burden for the tutor, yet the submission by tutelage was kept.

At the convulsive times when feudalism was formed, since the rights to sovereignty and property—public as well as private—were not well specified, the condition of women was uncertain. The condition of women was changing, heightened or lowered, according to social contingencies.

Because women had no public rights, first, they were denied private rights. Until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, force and arms impose order and sustain property directly. To jurists, a fiefdom "is a land possessed with charge of military service". And women could not have feudal right since they could not defend it with arms nor render military service. When fiefdoms turned into patrimonies and were inheritable (according to Germanic norms women could also inherit), feminine succession was admitted. But this did not improve their condition: woman was just an instrument through whom dominion was transferred, as in Greece.

Feudal property is not familial as in Rome, but of the sovereign, of the lord, and women too belong to the lord; it is she who chooses her husband. As it was written, "an heiress is a land and a castle: suitors contended to dispute that prize, and often the young woman is only 12 years old, or younger, when her father or lord gives her as prize to any baron." The woman needs a lord who "protects" her and her rights; thus, a Duchess of Burgundy proclaimed to the king: "My husband has just died, but what good is mourning ... ? Find me a husband who is powerful, because I much need him to defend my land." In this form, her spouse had great marital power over the woman, whom he treated without consideration, mistreating her, beating her, etc. and whose only obligation was to "punish her reasonably" — the same codes required today to correct children.

The prevailing warlike conception made the medieval knight pay more attention to his horses than to his wife and the lords preached: "damned be the knight that seeks advice from a woman when he should participate in a tourney". While women were commanded: "get into your apartments, painted and gilded, sit in the shade, drink, eat, weave, tint the silk, but bother not of our affairs. Our affairs are to fight with sword and steel. Silence!" That is how the medieval world of the lords demeaned and cast their women away.

The 13<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of a movement of literary women, which travelling from

south to north increased their prestige, the same one which was linked to chivalry, love and the intense Marianism of that era. It did not modify it deeply, as S. de Beauvoir said in *The Second Sex*, a book in which abundant information — useful data, of course, apart from the existentialist concepts of its author, which is not the idea that can fundamentally change the condition of women, nor the economic basis sustaining it — about the history of women is found. When the fiefdom goes from a right based on military service to an economic obligation, since they were perfectly capable of fulfilling a monetary obligation, we can see an improvement in the condition of women. That way the seigniorial right to marry to his vassals was suppressed and women's tutelage was extinguished.

Thus, whether single or widowed, women had the same rights as men in possessing a fiefdom, she governed it and fulfilled its administrative duties and even commanded its defence by participating in battles. But to survive, feudal society, like all those based on exploitation, requires the submission of women in marriage and marital power: "the husband is the tutor of the wife," was preached, or as Beauvoir said: "As soon as marriage was consummated, the goods of one and the other are common by virtue of the marriage," justifying marital tutelage.

In feudal society, as in others ruled by exploiters — slavery or capitalism, what has been described about the condition of women has governed and still governs — but we must highlight that only in the condition of poor women can we see a different and softer condition in the face of marital power, the root of this situation must be seen in the economic participation by women of the popular classes and in the absence of great riches.

The development of capitalism takes feudalism to its decomposition, a situation that impresses its marks on the condition of women, as we have seen already. It suffices to emphasise that in the beginning and development of the burghs, women took part in the election of deputies to the General States, which shows feminine political participation as well as the existence of rights over family goods, since the husband could not alienate real properties without the consent of the wife. However, absolutist legislation would soon fetter these norms to fight off the diffusion of the bad bourgeois example.

This historical exposition exemplifies the thesis by Engels and the classics on the social roots of the condition of women and its relationship to property, family and State, it helps us to understand its certainty and see its actuality more clearly. All this carries us to the conclusion: the need to firmly adhere to the working class positions and apply them to understand the woman question, participate in its solution, and reject — constantly and decisively — the distortions of Marxist theses on the subject and the so-called superior developments which are but attempts to substitute bourgeois ideas for proletarian concepts on this front, to disorient the women's movement on the march.

Having exposed the social condition of women and the historical outline of its development linked to property, family and State, what remains is to treat the question of the **emancipation of women** from a Marxist viewpoint.

A Marxist holds fundamentally that the development of machinery incorporates women, as well as children, into the productive process and thereby multiplies the number of hands to be exploited, destroys the working class family, physically degenerates women and materially and morally sinks them into the miseries of exploitation.

Analysing women and children at work Karl Marx wrote:

"In so far as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means of employing labourers of **slight muscular strength**, and those whose bodily development is

incomplete, but whose limbs are all the more supple. The **labour of women and children was**, therefore, the first cry of the **capitalist** application of machinery. That mighty substitute for labour and labourers was forthwith changed into a means for **increasing the number of wage-labourers** by enrolling, under the direct sway of capital, every member of the woman's family, without distinction of age or sex. Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family."

"The value of labour-power was determined, not only by labour-time necessary to maintain the individual adult labourer, but also by that necessary to maintain his family. Machinery, by throwing every member of that family on to the labour market, spreads the values of the man's labour-power over his whole family. It thus **depreciates** his labour-power. ..."

"Thus we see, that machinery, while augmenting the human material that forms the principal object of capital's exploiting power, at the same time raises the **degree of exploitation**."

"By opening the factory doors to women and children, making them flock in great numbers to the combined ranks of the working class, machinery finally breaks down the resistance of the male worker to this, despite the despotism of capital within manufacturing." (*Capital*, volume I, pp. 394-395, Economic Culture Fund, 1966. *Emphasis in original*.)

Continuing his masterful analysis, Marx himself describes to us how capitalism uses even the virtues and obligations of women for its advantage:

"Mr. E., manufacturer, told me how in his textile mills he employed exclusively women, preferably married ones, and above all those who had at home a family living from or depending on her salary, since these were much more active and zealous than single women; besides, the need to procure sustenance to their families forced them to work harder. In this way, the virtues characterising women are turned against them: all the purity and sweetness of their character are turned into instruments of torture and slavery." (Note 57 of above quoted volume and edition of *Capital*, p. 331)

But just as by incorporating women into production, capitalism increases exploitation, simultaneously with this process it provides the material basis for women to struggle and demand their rights. And it's a starting point for the struggle for their emancipation, as Engels taught in *Origin...*:

"**The freeing of women demands as a first condition** the re-incorporation of the entire female sex into social industry, which in turn requires that the individual family no longer be society's economic unit." (*our emphasis*).

And evidently capitalism, with its own future interests, sets the basis for the future emancipation of women, as well as creating the class that will destroy it as it develops: the proletariat.

On the other hand, their economic participation and the development of the class struggle pushes forward the **Politicisation of Women**. We already highlighted how the French Revolution pushed forward the political and organisational development of women and how, by uniting them, mobilising them and forcing them to fight, it set the basis for the feminist movement. We also saw how feminist demands were reached through the rise of revolution and how their rights were abolished and their conquests swept away when the revolutionary process was fettered and thrown back. However, with all the positive aspects that the incorporation of women into the French Revolution had, the resulting politicisation of women was but elementary, restricted and very little compared with the major advances represented by the politicisation of women by the

working classes. What does this politicisation imply? When capitalism massively incorporates women into the economic process, it wrests them away from inside of the home, to attract them mostly to factory exploitation, making industrial workers out of them. Thus women are forged and developed as an integral part of the most advanced and latest class in history. Women initiate their radical process of politicisation through their incorporation into the workers' union struggle (the great change implied by this is observed concretely in our country by the transformation seen in women workers, peasants and teachers of Peru, amidst the union struggle). A woman arrives at more advanced forms of organisation, which goes on building her up and shaping her ideologically for the proletarian concepts and, finally, she arrives at superior forms of struggle and political organisation by incorporating herself, through her best representatives, into the ranks of the Party of the working class, to serve the people in all forms and fronts of struggle organised and led by the working class through its political vanguard. This politicisation process, which only the proletariat is capable of producing, and the new type of women fighters it generates has materialised in many glorious women fighters whose names are recorded in history: Luisa Michel, N. Krupskaya, Rosa Luxemburg, Liu Ju-lan and others, whose memory the people and the proletariat keep.

Like today, for Marxism of yesterday, the politicisation of women was the key-issue in her emancipation and the classics dedicated special attention to it. Marx taught: "Anyone who knows something of history knows that the great social changes are impossible without the feminist ferment. Social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the weak sex." (*Letter to Kugelmann, 1888*.) And to Lenin, the participation of women was more much urgent and important to the revolution:

"The experience of all the liberation movements confirms that the **success of the revolution depends on the degree in which women participate**." (*Our emphasis*)

Thus the development of the class struggle and its ever greater sharpening, within the specific social conditions of the revolutionary struggle under conditions of imperialism, sets forth and demands more decisively the politicisation of women. That is why, Lenin himself, in the middle of World War I and foreseeing the future battles for the working class which required preparedness, called to fight for:

"17. Abolition of any and all limitations without exception to the political rights of women in comparison to men. Explaining to the masses the special urgency of this transformation at moments in which the war and scarcity disquiet the masses of people and awaken interest in and attention to politics, particularly among women."

And he proposed:

"It is necessary that we fully develop systematic work among these feminine masses. We must educate those women we have managed to wrest away from passivity, we must recruit them and arm them for the struggle, not just the proletarian women who work in the factories or toil in the home, but also the peasant women, the women in the various layers of the petty-bourgeoisie. They too are victims of capitalism."

With these words, Lenin demanded the politicisation of women, the struggle for demanding their political rights, the need to explain to the masses the urgency of politically incorporating women, the need of working together with them, to educate them, organise them and prepare them for all forms of struggle. Finally, he emphasised orienting themselves towards working women, but without forgetting the importance of peasant women and remembering the various classes or layers of women being exploited, since all of them could and should be mobilised for the people's

struggle.

From the above, we see how the politicisation of women was proposed by Marxism from its beginnings, considering women's struggles as being in solidarity with the struggles of the working class. That is why, last century Bebel said that "woman and the worker have in common their condition as oppressed," and why the Socialist Congress of 1879 proclaimed the equality of the sexes and the need to struggle for it, reiterating the solidarity of the revolutionary feminist women and the working class struggle. On the other hand, as China proclaims today, following Mao Tse-tung's thesis:

"The emancipation of women is an integral part of the liberation of the proletariat." (*Peking Review*, No. 10, 1972)

This brings us to consider: **How can the emancipation of women be achieved?** Investigating capitalist society and societies, in general, where exploitation and oppression prevail, Engels verified that misery, inequality and submission exist among men. But emphasising the woman question he pointed out: "The state of affairs with respect to the equality of men and women is no better than their legal inequality, which we have inherited from prior social conditions, is not the cause but the effect of the economic oppression of women." And he continued "Women cannot be emancipated unless they assume a large socially measurable role in production and are only tied insignificantly by domestic work. And this has only been possible with modern industry, which not only admits feminine labour in a large scale but fatally demands it."

This assertion by Engels, if taken out of context and unrelated to similar ones from *Origin ...* helps some people, pseudo-Marxists and distorters of Marxism. They stretch his idea to claim that the mere participation of women in the economic process is sufficient for their emancipation. Engels proposed that the *incorporation of women into production was a condition*, that it is a base upon which women act in favour of their emancipation, and that this demands to socially end domestic work which absorbs and annihilates women, which to Engels implies destroying private ownership of the means of production and developing large-scale production based on the social ownership of the productive means. We repeat that it is good to be very clear about this thesis by Engels, because today some are attempting to hide themselves in this classic to distort the Marxist position on the woman question and to preach the simple participation of women in the economic process for the sake of the exploiting classes. Thus they are hiding the root of women's oppression which is private ownership by avoiding large-scale social production based on destroying private property of the means of production.

Foreseeing this distortion, as in other cases, the classics analysed the problem of whether the incorporation of women to the productive process, which capitalism began, was capable of making men and women truly equal. Mao Tse-tung gave the concise and powerful answer once more in the 1950s:

**"True equality between men and women can only be achieved in the process of the socialist transformation of the whole of society."**

Lenin researched the situation of women in bourgeois society and compared it with how it was under the dictatorship of the proletariat, an analysis that led him to establish:

"From remote times, the representatives of all the movements of liberation in western Europe, not for decades, but during centuries, proposed the abolition of these antiquated laws and demanded the legal equality of women and men, but no democratic European State, not even the most advanced republics, have managed to achieve this, **because wherever capitalism exists, wherever private ownership of the factories is**

**maintained, wherever the power of capital is maintained, men go on enjoying privileges."**

"From the first months of its existence, Soviet power, as the power of workers, realised the most decisive and radical legislative change with respect to women. In the Soviet Republic, no stone was left unturned which kept women in a position of dependence. I am referring precisely to those laws which used the dependent situation of women in special way, making her victim of the inequality of rights and often even of humiliations, that is to say laws on divorce, on natural children and on the right of women to sue the father in court to support the child." (*Tasks of the Women Workers in the Soviet Republic.*)

From this comparative analysis the conclusion is taken that only the revolution which places the working class in power in alliance with the peasantry is capable of sanctioning, and even further, in enforcing the true judicial legal equality between men and women. However, as Lenin himself taught, this true legal equality initiated by the revolution is but the beginning of a protracted struggle for the full and complete equality in life of men and women:

"However, the more we rid ourselves of the burden of old bourgeois laws and institutions, the more clearly we see that we have barely cleared the terrain for construction, yet construction itself has not begun."

"The woman continues to be **a slave of the home**, despite all the liberating laws, because she is overburdened, oppressed, stupefied, humiliated by the **menial domestic tasks**, which make her a cook and a nurse, which waste her activity in an absurdly unproductive, menial, irritating, stupefying and tedious labour. The phrase, emancipation of women, will only begin for real in the country at the time the mass struggle begins (led by the proletariat already owning the power of the State) against this petty home economy, or more precisely, when their mass transformation begins in a large-scale socialist economy." (*A Great Initiative: emphasis in original.*)

Thus, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung answered the anticipated opportunist distortions and pseudo-developments of Marxism, which today attempts to distort the theses of Engels and confuse the working class position on the woman question.

Marxism conceives the struggle for the emancipation of women as a protracted but victorious struggle: "This is protracted struggle, which requires a radical transformation of the social technique and of customs. But this struggle will end with the full victory of communism." (Lenin, *On the Occasion of International Working Women's Day.*)

The above, in essence, shows there is an identity of struggle between the revolutionary feminist movement and the working class struggle for the construction of a new society; and, besides, it helps to understand the sense of Lenin's words calling women workers to develop the institutions and means which the revolution placed at their disposal:

"We say that the emancipation of workers must be the work of the workers themselves and likewise **THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN WORKERS MUST BE THE WORK OF WOMEN WORKERS THEMSELVES.**" (*The tasks...*)

These are the central theses of Marxism on the emancipation, politicisation and the condition of women – the positions which we prefer to transcribe for the most by quotations from the classics, because these positions are not sufficiently known. Besides that, because they were masterfully and concisely expressed by the authors themselves, which relieves us from the task of pretending to give them new editing, more so after seeing their full and complete actuality. On the other hand, the distortions of the Marxist positions attempted today on the woman question also demand the

dissemination of the words of the classics themselves.

Finally, it is indispensable, even if it is in passing only, to make note that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung set forth the thesis of the emancipation of women and not that of women's liberation, as can be appreciated from the cited quotations. On this particular, it suffices to say that the analysis of the condition of Woman through history shows Her as subject to tutelage and in a situation of submission with respect to the male, which makes Woman a being who, while belonging to the same class as Her husband or the man She has a relationship with, finds Herself in a situation of inferiority with respect to Him, an inferiority which the laws bless, sanctify and impose. Consistent with this situation of undervaluing throughout history we see the need to demand Her rights to achieve a formal equality with Man under capitalism and how only the revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the proletariat is capable of setting up and fulfilling a genuine legal equality of men and women, though, as we saw, plentiful equality in life, as Lenin said, will develop as large-scale socialist production develops. These simple observations show the certainty of the thesis on women's emancipation conceived as part of the liberation of the proletariat. While the thesis of women's liberation historically surfaces as a bourgeois thesis, hidden at the bottom of which is the counterpoising of men and women due to sex and camouflaging the root of the oppression of women. Today we see how women's liberation is exposed more and more in each passing day as bourgeois feminism, which aims at dividing the people's movement by separating the feminine masses from it and seeking mainly to oppose the development of the women's movement under the leadership and guide of the working class.

## II. MARIÁTEGUI AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

50 years ago Mariátegui, with his sharp historical foresight, perceived the importance of the woman question in the country and its perspective ("The first feminist quivers are latent in Peru..."). He devoted two of his works to this question: *Woman and Politics* and *Feminist Demands* [*Las Reivindicaciones Feministas*: where *reivindicaciones* are the political and economic demands of women – *Translator's note*], besides many other contributions found in his writings. It is indispensable to go back ourselves to this source, because in it we will find the position of the Peruvian working class with respect to the Woman question. Moreover, this issue is less known and researched aspect of Mariátegui's work.

Jose Carlos Mariátegui taught us: "In our times, life in society cannot be studied without investigating and analysing its causes – the organisation of the family, the condition of the woman." Researching the nascent Peruvian feminist movement, he said: "Men, who are sensible to the great emotions of our times, cannot and should not feel themselves out of place or indifferent to this movement. The woman question is part of the human question."

So let's keep in mind that from the beginning of its political emergence, the working class of this country paid attention to the situation of women, establishing through its great representative their position with respect to women, as well as offering fighting support to feminist struggles, as shown by the solidarity of textile workers and drivers with the women workers of A. Field Co. in 1926.

What was the feminist development that attracted such accurate attention? The condition of women in the country suffered a noticeable change especially in this century and more specifically after the two world wars. While the condition of peasant women changed more slowly, that of her sisters turned workers and professionals experienced more rapid and profound changes. Evidently

the presence of women in our society has been conquering positions ever more widely.

In the last century, the action and literary work of Clorinda Matto de Turner, Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera and Margarita Praxedes Munoz, highlighted the feminine presence over a background of millions of peasants, workers and other women who, while anonymous, were subjected to harsh social repression of feudal roots. The Peruvian Woman of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had minimal access to education. But even when She was allowed to attend secondary education, the educational norms established for Her was a watered down curriculum comparable to the last primary grade for males plus some of the secondary school courses. The abandonment of feminine schooling is clearly shown by the fact that while there were private institutions which tended or prepared students to enter the university, it was not until 1928 the 'National Women's School of Lima' opened its doors in Lima, till then there was no such school of its kind in the capital city. It's good to notice how by the end of the last century some women educationists were worried about the education of women and were proposing for its renewal. They demanded to overcome the erroneous concept of "educating them [women] only for marriage, which leads one to think such is the sole purpose in their life" and women's education must not be in the hands of nuns, because abandoning the world they were not in a position to build up good women and also we need to end the misconception that a single or married woman who works outside the home degenerates socially. Simultaneously, they demanded and created new educational centres. Teresa Gonzalez de Fanning was outstanding in this aspect.

Similarly college education was closed to them, their presence at the University was not noticed until the 1890s, and it was not until 1908 that women were authorised to enter and seek a degree at the University and exercise the professions. The demeaning of women and their social outcasting are thus clearly seen in education. However, with the 20<sup>th</sup> century transformations, women see an increase in their possibilities to pursue studies and work as professionals, most of them finding work as teachers. Only after World War II, there was a diversification of women's careers scene. University graduates, whom early in the century could be counted with the fingers of the hand, almost reach the current stage of 30% of college graduates of the country.

But what really would imply a profound, radical and far-reaching change is the incorporation of women into factory production. The proletarianisation of the Peruvian woman began this century hand in hand with the introduction of machinery and the development of bureaucratic capitalism. We see in our environment with its specific conditions, the situation described by Marx and which we quoted above, with the productive incorporation of women as workers, the process of proletarian politicisation opens up to the feminine masses of Peru. The participation of women in worker's unions begins; women join the struggle for salaries, the eight hour workday and working conditions; they participate in people's struggles together with other workers in actions against the high cost of living and price increases – which develops their ideological understanding; and finally, the women of the country amidst revolutionary combat become political militants of the working class.

The process of the political development of the Peruvian Woman, parallel to Her incorporation into labour, provided significant gains to the country's class struggle in the first part of this century – among which milestones, we must highlight the struggle for the eight hour workday by agricultural workers at Huaral, Barranca, Pativilca and Huacho, in which five female workers offered their lives in 1916, sealing with their blood their adherence to their class. Just as we highlight their participation in momentous actions against rising prices and the high cost of living in May 1919, actions in which women workers organised a Women's Committee so as to channel their supportive actions and agreed: "To make a call to all women, without distinction of classes, to co-operate

with their action in the **defence of the rights of Peruvian women**". In this great struggle women faces police forces at their meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> May, during which, after overcoming the bloody police repression, they proclaimed the following conclusions:

"**The women of Lima**, surrounding towns and peasants met in great public meeting on Sunday 25 May, 1919 at Neptune Park, having considered:

"**That it is not possible to further tolerate the situation of misery to which the high cost of subsistence goods and residential rents and all of life's necessities have reduced the people; that Peruvian women, as well as women in all civilised countries, have understood their mission to intervene in the resolution of the economic and social problems affecting them;**

Have agreed:

1. To make as their own the conclusions of the people's meeting at the Alameda de los Descalzos on May 4<sup>th</sup>.
2. In case these conclusions are not accepted, **to declare a general women's strike in all branches of industry**, leaving the date to the discretion of the Men's Committee for Diminishing the Cost of Subsistence" (Marinez de la Torre, *Notes for the Marxist Interpretation of the Social History of Peru*, Volume I, Lima 1947. *Our emphasis.*)

Another chapter in this history of women's struggle was waged by Socorro Rojo against the persecution, repression, imprisonment and blood politics unleashed by the dictatorship of Sanchez Cerro defending the rights and liberties of the people, especially the proletariat.

In the struggle referred to, besides the politicisation of women, or more strictly, as index of a correct perspective, it must be highlighted that in them the feminine masses waged their actions intimately united to the people's interests, which are their own, and in direct unity with and support for the struggles of the working class, which is their class.

In synthesis, the road travelled by Peruvian women in this century and the final part of last century is marked by their widespread incorporation into production and under bureaucratic capitalism pushed forward by North American imperialism and by their increased access to education, especially at the university level. These are the bases on which the first feminist impetuses of the country will hatch a phenomenon that Mariátegui described as follows:

"Feminism has not made its appearance in Peru artificially or arbitrarily. It has appeared as result of the new forms of intellectual and manual labour of women. **The women with true feminist affiliations are those women who work, the women who study.** The feminist idea prospers among women in intellectual jobs and in manual jobs: professors, university students, and workers. **It finds a propitious environment for its development in the university classrooms**, which attract more Peruvian women every day; and in the workers' unions, where factory women enrol and organise with the same rights and the same duties as the men. Besides this, we have the feminism of dilettantes, a little pedantic and a little mundance. For feminists of this kind, feminism is a mere literary exercise, merely a fashionable sport." (*Feminist Demands; our emphasis*)

It is on this basis that Mariátegui elaborated the position of the Peruvian proletariat on the woman question, by establishing the general line to follow on this matter for whoever wants to develop from a Marxist viewpoint. Let us see the basic problems from this position:

## 1. The Situation of Women

The starting point of the study of the woman question from the viewpoint of the Peruvian proletariat, demands to keep in mind that Mariátegui represents in the country the application of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to the material conditions of a backward and oppressed country, an application which leads him to scientifically present the semi-feudal and semi-colonial character of our society, in the midst of which a national-democratic revolution has developed since 1928 through a long and sinuous process whose higher stage is still pending. This is the substance and guidance of Mariátegui's thought. Starting from these considerations, we must treat all the problems and policies that he established and among them what is relevant to the woman question.

Thus, Mariátegui starts from the semi-feudal and semi-colonial character of Peruvian society to judge the situation of women. This, in itself, rejects from the outset the obsolete theory of "feminine nature." Conceiving of Woman in situation or condition derived from the structure of society in which She functions and emphasising the dynamic, changing character of women's situation, he points out the transforming role of work on the condition of Woman with respect to Her social status and ideas. The following paragraph expresses this and other points as well:

"**But if bourgeois democracy has not realised feminism, it has involuntarily created the conditions and moral and material premises for its realisation.** It has valued women as a productive element, as an economic factor, by making more intensive and extensive use of their work each day. **Work radically changes the mind and the spirit of women. Women acquire by virtue of their work a new concept of themselves.** In ancient times society destined women to marriage and idleness or menial work Today it fates them, above all, to work. This fact has changed and elevated the position of women in life."

So it remains clear, for the Peruvian proletariat, that it is the society which imparts women their condition and not some mischievous nature; that the feminine condition is changing one and that it is the work that is imparting a great leap in the position and concept of women. This is the Mariátegui's starting point, at the same time it charges against the biological determinist reduction of women to simple reproducers, and goes against the rose coloured myths which treacherously help to maintain their oppression:

"**the defence of the poetry of the home, in reality, is a defence of the serfdom of women.** Far from ennobling and dignifying the role of women, it diminishes and reduces it. **The woman is more than a mother and a female**, just as man is more than a male." (The last two paragraphs belong to *Feminist Demands*, our emphasis.)

Developing the thesis of the social root of the feminine condition, Mariátegui sets out the difference between Latin and Saxon women, establishing the causal connection between feudal background and temperament and differences in each woman:

"**The Latin woman lives more prudently**, with less passion. She does not have that urge for truth. **Especially the Spanish woman is very cautious and practical.** Waldo Frank, precisely, defined her with admirable accuracy: 'The Spanish woman - he wrote - is a pragmatist in love. **She considers love as a means of creating children for heaven.** Nowhere in Europe is there a less sensual, less amorous woman. As a girl she is a pretty, fresh hope colour her cheeks and enlarges her black eyes. **To her, marriage is the highest state to which she can aspire. Once married**, this innate coquettishness of

spring disappears like a season in her: **in a moment, she turns judicious, fat and maternal**’.” (*Signs and Works*, Waldo Frank’s *Rahab*)

What was said about the Spanish woman naturally extends to Latin American women and among them those in this country and it shows that the feminine mentality generated by the ancient and present feudal background is still not overcome. But besides this, analysing the relations between imperialism and the oppressed countries of America, Mariátegui highlights the alienating mentality which Yankee domination impresses on feminine mentality:

“The *limena* [*native of Lima – translator*] bourgeoisie fraternises with the Yankee capitalists, and even with their lower employees, at the Country Club, at tennis and on the streets. The Yankee can marry, without any inconvenience of race or religion, the creole senorita, and she feels no scruples of nationality or culture by preferring marriage with an individual of the invading race. And neither does the middle class girl feel any scruples in this respect. The *huachafita* [*women from working class extraction, but think otherwise – translator*] who is able to trap a Yankee employed by the Grace Corporation or the Foundation does it with the satisfaction of having elevated her social condition.” (*Imperialist Viewpoint*.)

Thus, typifying the feminine condition in our society as serfdom of women, discarding all interpretation sustained by the supposed “deficient feminine nature”, the semi-feudal and semi-colonial background that is its root is established.

On this basis, Mariátegui goes on to the material analysis of Peruvian women belonging to the different classes, he masterfully depicts working women:

“If the masses of youth are so cruelly exploited, proletarian women suffer equal or worse exploitation. Until very recently the proletarian woman had her labour limited to domestic activities at home. With the advancement of industrialisation, she enters the competition in the factory, shop, enterprise, etc. ... Thus we see Her in textile factories, cracker factories, laundries, container and cardboard box factories, soaps, etc., where She performs the same work as the male worker, from operating the machinery, to the most menial job, always earning 40% to 60% less than the male. At the same time, these women train themselves to do industrial jobs, they penetrate also into the activities of the office, commercial houses, etc., always competing with men and to the great benefit of the industrial enterprises, which get a noticeable reduction in salaries and immediate increase in profits. In agriculture and mining, we find proletarian women in frank competition with men, and wherever we may look we find large numbers of exploited women, rendering their services in all sorts of activities. ... In the process of our social struggles, the proletariat has had to set forth specific demands for their defence. Textile unions, which up to now have shown the greatest interest in this question, though not exclusively so, have gone on strike more than once with the object of forcing compliance with regulations which, specified by law, the capitalists simply refuse to implement. We have some capitalists (such as the “friend” of the worker Mr. Tizon Y Bueno) who have not hesitated to consider as an “offence” the fact that a woman worker was pregnant, for which “offence” she has been terminated, so as to avoid complying with what the law stipulates. At the cracker factory, the exploitation of women is vile.” (*Manifesto of the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers [CGTP] to the working class of the country. The Woman Question*; a document edited under Mariátegui’s leadership)

Is this a valid description? Yes. In essence, the workers’ situation remains the same: the widest

exploitation in ever more branches of industry – in some of them which is truly horrifying; the use of female labour so as to lower the salaries – their salaries being lower than those paid to men; non-fulfilment of laws in protecting women and hidden anti-worker positions by the false “friend” of the proletariat. Also very current is the need to support the achievements of the women workers.

Similarly, Mariátegui goes on to review the condition of indigenous peasant women, of whom he says that together with their children they are obligated “to render gratuitous services to the proprietors and their families, as well as to authorities”, their miserable condition and social placement has a root: latifundia and serfdom.

As regards the petty-bourgeoisie, besides pointing out the tribulations of the women of this class, the analysis of primary school teachers helps Mariátegui to establish how the social mean, the nearness to the people and their dedication to full time teaching modifies their attitude and spirits opening them up so in within can be shown “easily the ideals of the forgers of a new social State,” since: “None of their interests has anything in common with the capitalist regime. Her life, Her poverty, Her work, fuses Her to the proletarian masses.” He proposes addressing them since “in their ranks the vanguard will recruit more and better elements.”

## 2. Historical background of the feminist struggle

As we can see for Mariátegui, industrialisation incorporates Woman into work and through this it transforms Her condition and spirit. He points out, like the classics, the double situation implied:

“When woman advances on the road of her emancipation over a bourgeois democratic terrain, in exchange this fact provides the capitalist with cheap labour and at the same time a serious competitor to the male worker.” (Above cited *Manifesto*.)

On the other hand, pointing out that the French Revolution included some elements of the feminist movement, he vindicates the figure of Babeuf, leader of the egalitarians, whom he considers “an asserter of feminist demands” and of whom he quotes the following lucid words:

“Do not impose silence on this sex which does not deserve to be disdained.... If you do not count on women for anything in your republic, you will make lovers of monarchy out of them”;

and “ this sex that the tyranny of men has always wanted to annul, this sex which has never been useless in the revolutions.”

And balancing the contribution made by the French Revolution to the emancipation of women he said in *Women and Politics*:

“The French Revolution, however, inaugurated a regime of political equality for men, not for women. The Rights of Man could have been called rather, the Rights of Males. With the bourgeoisie women ended up much more alienated from politics than with the aristocracy. Bourgeois democracy was an exclusively male democracy. Its development had to end up, however, intensely favourable to the emancipation of women. Capitalist civilisation provided women with the means of increasing their capacity and improving their position in life.”

Therefore, what the bourgeois class does for women was set accurately: while it is capable of providing conditions for Her development, it is incapable of emancipating Her. Mariátegui knew this very well: how despite this limitation, capitalism, as it develops, opens up for women the doors to various activities, including politics, very especially so in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so much that it becomes a symbol of this. Developing this statement, Mariátegui himself vindicates many notable

women and points out and demonstrates the contributions many women have made to poetry, to the novel, to the arts, in general, to the struggle and politics. Thus he teaches us how to judge women of the various classes and celebrities, pointing out their merits and shortcomings and showing what is principal in each individual case and what is more important, highlighting their contributions to women's advancement.

### 3. Feminist Movement

A central point that greatly important for today is the Mariátegui's proposal on the general problems of women, with his theses on the feminist movement, on which subject three parts are noteworthy: feminism; politicisation of women and organisation.

With respect to *Feminism*, Mariátegui held that it emerges "neither artificially nor arbitrarily" among us, but it corresponds with the incorporation of women into manual and intellectual work. In this viewpoint, he highlights mainly that feminism thrives among women who work outside the home and points out that the proper environments for the development of the feminist movement are the university classrooms and the labour unions. He then sets forth the directive of orienting ourselves towards these fronts to push forward the mobilisation of women. Although it must be decided that such orientation in no way implies discounting peasant women, since we must remember that Mariátegui considered the peasant women as the most important class in our process, no doubt peasant women too are a front of mobilisation and, even more, the main source which the entire feminist movement as well as the proletariat want to reach.

In *Feminist Demands* Mariátegui proposes the essence of the feminist movement:

"None should be surprised if all women do not get together in a single feminist movement. Feminism has, necessarily, several colours, various tendencies. In feminism **three fundamental tendencies can be distinguished, three substantive colours: bourgeois feminism, petty-bourgeois feminism and proletarian feminism**. Each one of these feminisms formulates its own demands in a different way. The bourgeois woman unites feminism with the interests of the conservative class. The proletarian woman unifies her feminism with the faith for the revolutionary multitudes in the society of the future. **The class struggle — an historical fact and not merely a theoretical assertion — is reflected on the feminist stage. Women, like men, are reactionaries, centrists or revolutionaries**. They cannot, consequently, all fight the same battle side by side. **In the current human panorama, class differentiates individuals more than sex.**"

This is the essence of our woman question, the class character of the entire feminist movement. And we must keep this very much in mind, today more than ever, since once more the organisation of women is pushed forward, many groups arise, which, in general, are silent or hide the class character sustaining them, that is, the class which they serve, and preach a unification of women to demand their rights in opposition to men, as if to serve all women united, without distinction of class, for a supposed social transformation "humanist, Christian and in solidarity" social transformation, going through a few intermediate modalities of unclear or confused class positions. Substantially the problem is to ascertain the class root entailed by each women's group, organism, front or movement, to delimit positions and establish whom they serve, which class they serve, and if they are truly or are not on the side of the people.

These questions take us to a crucial problem: according to whose principle, which class criteria and orientation are we to build a feminist movement serving the people? Here Mariátegui's position

is brilliant and concise: "**Feminism, as a pure idea, is essentially revolutionary.**" And to him, revolutionary essentially meant proletariat. That way the entire people's feminist movement, which truly wants to serve the people and the revolution, has to be a feminist movement adhered to the proletariat and today in our country adherence to the proletariat means adherence to the thinking of Mariátegui.

With respect to the *Politicisation of women*. The Marxist classics have always attached great importance to this point, since without it, it is impossible to develop the mobilisation and organisation of women, and without these women we cannot fight side by side with the proletariat for their own emancipation. Following his great example, the Peruvian working class like Mariátegui has pointed out the importance of the politicisation of women, and highlighted that its deficiency or lack thereof serves reaction:

**"Women, for the most part, due to their little or no political education, are not a renovating force in contemporary struggles, but a reactionary force."** (*Figures and Aspects of Life in the World.*)

This is sufficiently clear. What we must ask ourselves is this: what does this politicisation mean? For the founder of the Communist Party, it meant the determined and militant incorporation of Woman into the class struggle, their mobilisation together with the people's interests, their integration into the organisations, individually learning themselves the ideology of the working class and all this is part of, assessed by and under the leadership of the proletariat. In synthesis, to incorporate women into politics, into class struggle, under the leadership of the working class.

With respect to the *Organisation of women*. Marxism teaches that in order to face their enemies and struggle for their class interests the proletariat has no other recourse than to organise itself; this principle is applied to the people, who are strong only if organised and therefore also to women, who can only fight successfully when they are organised.

As a "convicted and confessed Marxist" Mariátegui applied these principles creatively. He paid very special attention to organising the women workers, as is seen in the proposals in the *Manifesto of the CGTP* referred to above:

"All this accumulation of 'calamities' weighing on the exploited woman cannot be resolved except by immediate organisation. In the same way that unions have to build their youth cadres, they must create their women's sections, where our future women militants will be educated."

Mariátegui showed the same concern when under his guidance the statute of the mentioned Confederation was getting ready to form a Permanent Women's Commission at the Executive Committee level. Unfortunately, these orientations have not been correctly put into practice; it has remained a purely bureaucratic union position, called "feminine affairs" or some similar name, when it exists at all, without organically accommodating the women's sections of the unions, thus it remains as a pending task.

Later, in March 1930, the Communist Party approved the following motion:

"First. Creating a Provisional Secretariat to organise socialist youth, under immediate control of the Party.

Second. Creating a Provisional Secretariat to organise the working women, under the leadership and control of the Party.

Third. Both secretariats will struggle for the immediate organisation of youth of both sexes, for their political and ideological education, as a preparatory stage for their admission to the Party." (Martínez de la Torre, *op. cit.*, Vol. II; *our emphasis.*)

Here Mariátegui's thesis is materialised by the need to pay attention to the women's organisations, even at the most advanced political levels and his position is expressed that the organisation of women is, ultimately, the question of organising them under the leadership and control of the working class and the Party. Such proposals lead us to ask ourselves, about each woman's group, organism, front or movement – for which class, how and for what women would be organised? And keep in mind that these points can be satisfactorily resolved, that is, for the class and the people, only by adhering ourselves to the working class positions.

These three questions: feminism, politicisation of women and organisation of women and the theses which Mariátegui established, must be studied and applied consistently, since it is the only way by which an authentic popular feminist movement can be developed.

#### 4. The Emancipation of Woman

In this point too, like in the classics, Mariátegui also holds that under capitalism and industrialisation "women make advances on the road to their emancipation." However, under this system she does not even reach full legal equality. For that reason, a consistent feminist movement seeks to go further, and on this road it necessarily has to join the struggle of the proletariat. This understanding led the great proletarian thinker of our country to state: "The feminist movement appears solidly identified with the revolutionary movement;" and that although born of liberalism, only with the revolution could feminism be fulfilled:

"Born of a liberal womb, feminism has not yet been able to operate in the capitalist process. It is only now, when the historic path of democracy reaches its end, that woman acquires the political and legal rights of the male. **And it was the Russian revolution which explicitly and categorically conferred on women the equality and the liberty which for more than a century, from Babeuf and the egalitarians of the French Revolution, she had in vain clamoured for.**" (*Feminist Demands*)

And so, it is that in parallel with the construction of a new society the new woman will be emerging who will be "substantially different from the one formed by the now declining civilisation". These new women will be forged in the revolutionary crucible and will place the old type of woman deformed by the old exploitative system in the back room of history, a system that now sinks for the genuine dignifying of women.

"In the same measure as the socialist system replaces the individualist system, feminine luxuriousness and elegance will decay. ... Humanity will lose some luxurious mammals; but will gain instead many women. The clothing of the women of the future will be less ostentatious and expensive; but the condition of this new woman will be dignified. And the axis of feminine life will progress from the individual to the social ... A woman, in sum, will be less expensive but will be worth more." (*Women and Politics*.)

Besides these basic ideas Mariátegui takes care of other problems intimately linked to women in particular: divorce, marriage, love, etc.; he treats them with fine irony and takes sharply critical positions on them. However, as a good Marxist he does not centre his attention on them until taking them as the principal issue. To do so is to forget the principal struggle and fundamental goal, while spreading confusion and disorienting the revolutionary struggle.

Up to this point, we have presented and exposition of the central theses of Mariátegui's thought on the women question, in which we have used plentiful quotations for the same reasons we had when dealing with the Marxist positions on the subject.

### III. DEVELOPING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT FOLLOWING MARIÁTEGUI

#### 1. Current Relevance of Mariátegui

A conclusion is obvious from what has been said: the theses Mariátegui held on the woman question resulted from the consistent application of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions in a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society like ours. On this, generally, there is no disagreement and even when there is no open adherence, at least by silence an acceptance of such conclusions is shown. However, the question is not whether Mariátegui's thought was a correct application of Marxism to the country, the central issue is: how relevant is his thought to the present? This is a subject on which, while expressing an apparent recognition of Mariátegui and so as not to attack his immense and still growing prestige, some question its current relevance by mentioning that more than 40 years have elapsed and raising, erroneously and treacherously, the need to take into account "the creative development of Marxism in order to surpass it."

Analysing this point leads us to review, if only in passing, some of the positions that have been sustained in this country on the woman question. Thus, the notable and contentious thinker don Manuel Gonzales Prada handled this question in his 1904 work "Slaves of the Church," a work now included in *Hours of Struggle*. There, while expressing important concepts such as: "We can't know the people well until we have studied the social and legal condition of women," "the moral elevation of Man is measured by the concept He has on Woman: for the ignorant and brutal Man, the Woman is just a female; for the thinker and cultured Man, She is a brain and a heart". Just as we carry the family name of our father, we carry the moral making of our mother..." "The motive force, the great propellant of societies, does not function noisily at the plaza, nor at the revolutionary circle, it works in the home," which help to centre our attention on the importance of the Woman; on the other hand, he expresses ideas, such as: "The emancipation of woman, like the freedom of the slave, is not due to Christianity, but to Philosophy." "In Protestant nations feminine ascension is taking place so assuredly that complete emancipation is already foreseen", "Slaves and serfs owe their personal dignity to the efforts of noble and delicate persons, the Catholic Woman will only get emancipated by the energetic action of Man" and "in the battle of ideas no ally is more powerful than love."

Thus, we see that the contribution of Gonzales Prada to the emancipation of women overall positive. He pointed out and denounces the oppression of women, the important role they fulfil and the necessity to resolve the problem and set forth the emancipation of women. Although for him the root of the problem is Catholicism, which prevails in women, he believes that it is possible to reach emancipation under capitalism and he centres the problem in the individual; yet his ideas overall represent, a positive contribution in this and other topics, in studying the problems of women in the country.

And these ideas turn out to be more outstanding when we see nearly 30 years later Jorge Basadre proposing: "Gregorio Marañon demanded that the essential role of women is love, while the essential role of men is work. ... That is why little boys prefer to play with soldiers, symbol of struggle, of effort, an urge to supremacy, while little girls prefer to play with dolls, precociously motherly... By virtue of a command of nature, the charm of the Creole woman, even when not a *mestiza*, is different from women of other latitudes by a proper flavour like a fruit or vegetable... While, on the other hand the highest superiority of men is in their minds and since the American

mind is still determinedly influenced by Europe, the American glory is lost or lessened ... A notoriously beautiful woman in America can, on the other hand, raise interest anywhere." (*Peru: Problems and Possibilities*, Chapter XI. Here the position is so clearly reactionary that comments are unnecessary.)

If in Basadre, the ruling classes speak to us of "feminine nature" whose essence is love, they also in 1940 express themselves through Carlos Miro Quesada Laos as follows:

"The role of Woman in modern life is manifold. These are no longer the times – forever gone – when work was forbidden to her. Quite the contrary. Today Woman works in diverse activities. ... Because She has shown that She can act as efficiently as Man... She, therefore, has the duty to study, to prepare Herself for the future. And if in the chores, women share the duties with men, in others they are, and will always be, better than men. And what happens is that Woman contributes to life many things, which are innate to Her. She has the hands of mother and nurse. ... That is femininity which, thanks to God, they will never lose, despite the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of wars and revolutionary theories. The word "consolation" evokes women. ... After making Man, the Creator. ... put Her at his side to be His mate, to give stimulus and sweeten His life. ... First She must obey Her parents, then Her teacher, later on Her husband and always duty." (*Three Conferenes*, Lima 1941.)

With Basadre the exploiting classes postponed the work of women, with Miro Quesada, having new requirements, they exalt and demand the work of women. But deep down both are based on "feminine nature." But not only in this field do these ideas appear; incorrect positions are also found in writings and magazines which claim to be revolutionary and even Marxist, we read in them concepts like the following: Speaking of the "sense of life," that they participate in "social change," will enable, we understand it's meant women, "to undo their existential problem, since the sense of life would then reside in the profit each individual is able to offer her/his neighbours by way of will and effort." Considering the subject "Women and Society" after attempting to outline Engels' thesis on the development of the family the following is said: "we are possessed of the myth of the inferiority of women. And from that arises the need of liberating women... her liberation can only occur when the socio-economic structure changes with the development of a new society." Thus, liberation is highlighted, but not its social background, which is kept ambiguous and imprecise, ending up centred on how to regulate "the relationship between sexes in answer to the new ideology. If Woman is equal or must be equal to Man, the bases of such relationship would be:

- a) To liberate the women from religious alienation...
- b) To exercise the rights to choose her mate without obeying prejudices about masculine initiative...
- c) Not to understand women's liberation as a synonym for free love; ... and (fortunately!)
- d) Woman being equal to Man, She must not remain separate from politics by alleging Her feminine condition... love, as a starting point for a social change, should be the stimulus for youth (men and women) to struggle to build an egalitarian world without oppression or injustice."

And in publishing the story, "The Tomb of the Unemployed," a Christmas stories, which handily spreads the "generosity of women" and the "selfishness of men," a treacherous version of "feminine nature": "Later on the two ghosts became silent, each with its own thoughts. The woman in her past; the man in his future. The woman on what must be done, the man on what needs to be done

for him. One with generosity and one with selfishness, always nailed to their foreheads, always wrestling in the depths of their consciences." (*Magazine Mujer*, number 1 and 2; while having no dates they were printed in the 1960's). Evidently the ideas contained in *Mujer*, despite their apparent Marxist and revolutionary posturing, neatly reveal a bourgeois background, in no way do they express a proletarian position on the woman question.

What does this summary show us? The hard, cold truth is that by no means the question is the time frame when the positions are presented, nor in the problem "to take into account the creative developments of Marxism". But what is central is the class position on which a proposal is based. We have seen a position prior to Mariátegui, that of Gonzalez Prada, which despite preceding Mariátegui by some 30 years entails many positive elements, as well as a position contemporaneous with Mariátegui, that of Basadre, which is openly reactionary. Finally, two later positions, 30 years after Mariátegui, that of Miro Quesada, which renovates some criteria but is still reactionary, and that of the magazine *Mujer*, under Marxist colours, which definitely adheres to bourgeois positions despite it is being presented to us as revolutionary and in the service of women's emancipation.

What is the conclusion? As we said, the question is the class character on which the position on the woman question based upon. With Mariátegui, the greatest exponent of our working class, the proletarian position on the woman question is established. He set the basis of the proletarian political line on this question and his positions are completely current, on this topic as well as on others dealing with the revolutionary politics of the proletariat in our country. Therefore, developing a people's feminist movement demands, today more than ever, a firm and consistent adherence to the thought of Mariátegui, starting from an acceptance of its current relevance.

## 2. Retaking Mariátegui's Road

The struggle of Peruvian women and of proletarian women has a long tradition sealed with their blood, for over 50 years. Similarly, feminist organisations are long standing. Nevertheless, the process of organising Peruvian women began to expand in the 1960's, forecasting a brilliant perspective, though a long and twisting one.

At present we have a multitude of organisations of varying extension and levels, and what is more important, sprouting old seeds, we already saw signs pointing to a genuine people's feminist movement. Today we have a 'National Council of Women' with fifty years of existence, nurtured by the decrepit and obsolete theory of "feminine nature", a 'Women's Rights Movement' upholding a feminism aimed at liberation from dependence on men, a gamut of organisations being formed which support the current regime for the benefit of its corporatist process, under the orientation and control of *Sinamos* [*State's political organisation – National System for Social Mobilisation – Translator*] and under its concept of 'participation of women', part of their 'fully participatory democracy', which obscures that the root of women's oppression is private property and the subjugation of women that began with it. Twisting our history and using lowly the 'vulgar materialism' it propagandises that "in 1968, when the revolutionary process began, it seeks the authentic liberation of women with political equality and active participation" and is concluding: 'We are the ones, who must create the various forms of women's organisations', and thus saturated with the sly and underhanded bourgeois feminism. And 'National People's Union of Peruvian Women – a right opportunist organisation which staged, as usual, a collaborationist apparatus totally devoted to the service of the regime.

The increase and organisational strengthening of the masses of women demands a serious investigation of the woman question and a class analysis of the organisations that exist or are being formed, so the camps can define themselves in order to establish, as in other fields, the two lines on the woman question – the counter-revolutionary line commanded by imperialism and the middle bourgeois and the revolutionary line whose command and centre is the proletariat. That will help the organisational development of the people's feminist movement, which of necessity requires its construction to be unleashed amidst the two-line struggle, the expression of the class struggle and of the similar and conflicting interests of the contending classes. And of course, it must not be forgotten that within each line there are variations and differences in operation according to the classes grouped around each line. From there, the problem consists of establishing the two contrary lines and within each one the variations and nuances of the line, establishing which position is in command of each line and depending on the class each represents, gives each of the lines in struggle a revolutionary or counterrevolutionary character.

All that's been exposed takes us, therefore, to the necessity of "retaking Mariátegui's road on the woman question," in order to serve the formation and development of a **People's Feminist Movement** conceived as a **movement generated by the proletariat among the masses of women**, with the following characteristics:

1. Adherence to the thought of Mariátegui;
2. Class conscious organisation of the masses;
3. Subject to democratic centralism.

The construction of such MOVEMENT sets forth for us two problems:

1. Ideological-political construction, which necessarily implies providing it with Principles and Programme;
2. Organic construction, which we can serve by forming cores or groups of activists for carrying the Principles and Program to the masses of women — workers, peasants, professionals, university and secondary school students, etc. — They would work toward the politicisation of women, mobilising them through their struggles and organising them to adhere to the political struggle, in harmony with the orientation and politics of the proletariat.

To conclude this contribution to the study and understanding of the woman question, it is pertinent to transcribe a *Declaration of Principles and Programme* which for some time has been circulating in our midst, documents which, while emphasising their character as ongoing projects, can serve as a useful basis for discussion of the ideological-political construction of the ongoing **PEOPLE'S FEMINIST MOVEMENT**.





**José Carlos Mariátegui**  
(1895 – 1930)

***José Carlos Mariátegui***, had founded the Communist Party of Peru in 1928 and died at the age of only 35 years. Shortly before his death, he led the Party in affiliating with the Third Communist International of Lenin and Stalin. When the Party became revisionist, Mariátegui's teachings – the basis of the Party – were kept aside.

During the period of the *Great Debate* between Mao's CPC and revisionist CPSU, the ideological issues that came up in the forefront as well as the revolutionary upsurges in Peru, the revolutionary section of the PCP had taken up the study of Mariátegui's teachings to settle the political and ideological line of the Party, the basic line for the revolution in Peru, its targets and goals and tasks of the Communist revolutionaries.

Under the leadership of Comrade Gonzalo, rebuilding the PCP took 15 years. In 1975, a document "Retomemos a Mariátegui y Reconturamos Su Partido" [Reclaim Mariátegui and Rebuild His Party] was published by the Central Committee of the PCP under comrade Ganzalo's leadership. The completion of this process was marked by a 1979 Central Committee meeting that approved the initiation and continuation of People's War, which began a year later, i.e., in 1980 and is still continuing through the country.