

PREFACE

Since the original edition of this book in a printing of some 5000 copies in late October 1975, Redstockings has received numerous letters and inquiries from people who have read it. In this first mass media publication of *Feminist Revolution* we'd like to answer some questions about how and why the book came to be.

This book— the idea for which was first conceived in 1970— took three years to produce, \$6000 dollars to publish in its original newsprint format and many more dollars in free work time by the women who worked on it. The “free” work time was the result of the editors managing to find part-time jobs to support themselves for most of these years. \$5200 dollars for the first printing came from the personal donations, large and small, of about 200 people. \$800 dollars came as a contribution from the group of women who wrote *The New York Woman's Directory*— and represented a substantial part of the advance for their book. Most of the money came in response to a small but successful fund-raising mailing we sent out in 1973 announcing the reorganization of Redstockings.

The editors of *Feminist Revolution* are women who were involved in the Women's Liberation Movement from its beginnings in the late 1960's in New York Radical Women and Redstockings, two of the movement's seedbed groups which later broke up. The early dynamic period, to which these groups contributed so much, was short-lived. Just when the Women's Liberation Movement was getting off the ground, just when the radical feminist slogans and organizing ideas were proving to have enormous popularity, these groups began to dissolve. Why this process occurred is the story of what happened to all radical feminists working in this period, a story which we feel we have come to an understanding of and which we will be sharing in these pages.

Some of us in the group were involved sooner, some later, some more, some less. But we have all known each other for a long time, had some important experiences together, and helped each other to understand what was going on. In 1971 and 1972, three of us— Kathie Sarachild, Barbara Leon and Colette Price— published a radical fem-

inist quarterly called *Woman's World*, in which we saw ourselves as continuing the pro-woman work and political analysis of Redstockings. From this experience we came to feel it was necessary to reorganize Redstockings formally and begin work on a more far-ranging analysis of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Not all the contributors to this book are members of Redstockings. Some are women we have never met, never worked with or barely know, women from many distant places, who nonetheless have been observing and experiencing many of the same patterns. We hoped *Feminist Revolution* would be a collection of the clearest, most pertinent observation, research, theory and strategy, whoever produced it. Some of the selections used in the book are centuries old, but their points remain dramatically relevant to current problems. The conditions that gave rise to them are still around and the “old” struggles have fresh uses for us in illuminating patterns and tactics we continue to encounter.

Criticism is central to this book. So is history. The two are related because you can't write history, you can't sum up experience, without making evaluations. Both are very controversial in the Women's Liberation Movement and both are threatening. And both we see as absolutely necessary to achieving the liberation of women.

We felt that understanding what happened in the movement necessitated a critical examination of ideas, actions and their consequences for women. Some would see in this the danger of factionalism or betraying unity in the movement. We looked at our own experiences and saw that unity did not exist.

We had experienced the first burst of energy of the women's liberation movement but later we also experienced the destruction of the organizations that unleashed that energy. The only way out we saw was to analyze the cause of the disunity in order to work out theory as a basis on which women could unite again. Radical theory means finding the common ground, the common interest— and the common ground would lead to unity.

Finding a solid basis on which women can unite was

especially important in the current era of liberalism, the era in which 99% of the world proclaims itself against sexism—and yet in which women are still holding down two jobs and getting half men's pay. Our intention in this book was to help people sort through this kind of contradiction.

Throughout production—in the years spent writing, analyzing and piecing things together—we were aware that if we spent too long perfecting the work, to make things clearer, say everything there is to say and tie it all together, the book would never come out. There was always a new connection, a further insight, a new development. Already we had made the transition to a book from what had originally been intended as an annual journal. The question, “Are you finished yet?” became foreboding.

But at a certain point you must decide that enough has been tied together to be convincing even if it isn't “finished.” That decision made—you then, of course, rush it out.

The first version of the book was rushed out in a form we really considered unfinished, with a number of mistakes in it we didn't have time to discover and correct. In this edition we've had a chance to add to a couple of uncompleted articles and correct the mistakes we found. A few articles have been withdrawn. Others have been added. The reasons are all interesting but await further analysis in another work. This version is done, however, even if it isn't finished. It is now history—a piece of history. It is knowledge, revolutionary knowledge, however incomplete—to stimulate people for tomorrow's fight.

In 1969 Redstockings stated in its Principles, “We do not ask what is radical,” “revolutionary,” “reformist,” or “moral”—we ask: is it good for women or bad for women?” Although this book is full of such words as revolution, radical, liberal, conservative, we have not changed our minds about what we said in 1969. Our principles were an attempt to burst through the dogma surrounding the question of women at that time and assert our commitment to real revolution. They were a commitment against dogma in the interests of the liberation of women.

Lessons from other revolutions have been helpful to us

in piecing together our experiences in the WLM. Although some would prefer that women not be compared to other oppressed groups of people and that feminism not be compared to other struggles of those out of power against those in power, there are, in fact, many points of similarity. These similarities are proof that women's problems are not unique to a sex but are characteristic instead of a political position which various groups of human majorities have found themselves in at various times. There are, of course aspects of the female situation that are unique, which will lead to different specific solutions and will chart new lessons for the revolutionary goals of humanity as a whole. But we have much to learn from studying other revolutionary efforts.

Mao Tse-tung's formulation about China's revolutionary war would seem to be useful for women to extend to their own situation: “The laws of war are a problem which anyone directing a war must study and solve. The laws of revolutionary war are a problem which anyone directing a revolutionary war must study and solve. The laws of China's revolutionary war are a problem which anyone directing China's revolutionary war must study and solve . . . Therefore we must study the laws of war in general, we must also study the laws of revolutionary war, and finally, we must study the laws of China's revolutionary war.”

Women can apply the lesson. We must study the laws of revolution, in general, and the particular laws of feminist revolution.

In the coming years we will be working on just such solutions.

What we've tried to do with this book is reestablish some old principles and break some new ground. Reconstructing, illuminating and evaluating the movement's history must be an ongoing process in which the movement as a whole engages as it goes along. We hope others will join us in the necessary labor and through collective work and action be led deeper and deeper into effective revolution.

—June, 1976