

International VIEWPOINT

Issue No. 115

9 March 1987

12FF; £0.85; \$2

*International
Women's
Day
1987*



*Special
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Women's struggles around the world
Philippines ★ South Africa ★ Eastern Europe
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INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

Fortnightly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, in conjunction with the French language *Inprecor*, which appears on alternate fortnights.

IV, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Directeur de publication: Christian Lamotte. Commission paritaire: 64324. ISSN: 0294-2926. Imprimé par Rotographie.

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International Viewpoint is regularly catalogued by the US Alternative Press Index

Zionist police raid human rights bulletin

ISRAELI POLICE in Jerusalem raided the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem on February 16, arresting four press workers who were in the building at the time. Three were later released, but the authorities continue to hold the director of the center, Michel Warshawsky, who has also written for *International Viewpoint* and similar publications.

Warshawsky is also a well-known anti-zionist activist and a leader of the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state. As we go to press, we do not yet know whether he has been charged or what charge the police may intend to make against him.

The Center was closed for six months under an "anti-terrorist" decree. Since his arrest, Warshawsky has been interrogated every day, according to his friends in Israel, in an evident attempt to link him to the Palestinian organizations.

News from Within, the fortnightly bulletin produced by the Alternative Information Center, whose publication has now been stopped, was issued in English for an international audience. Its January 26 issue contained a day-by-day account of escalating Israeli repression against Palestinian protests on the West Bank. In fact, the Zionist authorities move against this publication comes in the context of a mounting wave of repression.

While West Bank Palestinian publications have frequently been shut down, such moves have been quite rare in Israel itself, and this is the first such instance in Jerusalem. Consequently, the raid and arrests touched off very broad protests in Israel, including intellectuals such as the writer AB Joshua, most of the daily press and all of the left.

Telegrams and motions of protest should be sent to Israeli embassies in the countries concerned. A fund has been opened to help pay for Warshawsky's defence. Contributions can be sent to the "Campaign for the Release of Michel Warschawsky" at 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France.

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"Women have to unite and struggle for liberation"

THE LATEST important event in the Philippines, the plebiscite of February 2, 1987, gave overwhelming approval to the adoption of the New Philippine Constitution. Few really voted on the content of the document. At this time of political crisis in the country, it essentially meant a big yes to President Corazon Aquino and a big no to the military right. (1)

Looking at what this Constitution has to say in terms of the rights of Filipino women, it maintains a no-divorce, no-abortion policy. The provision states: "The state recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception." (2)

SONIA RUPON

Confronting the issue of abortion is fairly new for the Filipino women's movement. The deep influence of Catholic values in Philippine social life, and the weight of the Catholic Church in the country's politics, evidently complicates this task. Yet the problem of abortion, particularly amongst poor and working women, is acute.

The Filipino women's movement marked a big step when, in August last year, certain parties of women came out with their position on how to handle the problem of abortion in the country. In their Statement of Common Position and Concern, which they submitted to the Constitution Commissioners, they firmly stated that: "Such a constitutional provision would be discriminatory against poor women, who, being the ones deprived of option in the first place, would continue to submit themselves in silence to highly dangerous forms of abortion, subject to the raw exploitation of unscrupulous persons." (3)

The women committed themselves to look seriously into the extent of the problem in the country, the existing legislation and support structures, and to unite efforts in exchange for having such a provision in the Constitution.

The past few years, particularly after the murder in 1983 of Ninoy Aquino, the president's husband, saw the formation of women's groups in different sectors of society. Since

then a redefining of roles has been constantly made as the movement develops and matures, and as the situation changes. Debates on whether to take on a strictly feminist perspective, or whether to address the national liberation struggle as politically active women, seem to lead to clearer positions today.

GABRIELA is a federation of different women's groups and will soon be having its Fourth National Congress. They are also presently sponsoring an international gathering of women from different parts of the world. In last year's congress present national chairperson Mary John Mananzan said, in reference to the ongoing debates then: "We think that there are two main principles on which a women's movement in the third world should be based. The first is that women's liberation in the third world cannot be separated from the context of economic, political, and socio-cultural life of society.

"Women's struggle cannot be isolated"

"We cannot consider the women's struggle as something isolated from the context of social liberation. But we should not wait until society is liberated before addressing ourselves to the women's question. It is clear that even in the process of societal

liberation we already have to address ourselves, and we really have to unite and struggle for women's liberation." (4)

Recently, in October, a new women's group in the form of a women's political party was launched. The Kababaihan para sa Inang Bayan (KAIBA) or Women for the Mother Country, is an initiative to make women actively involved in electoral political life, while differentiating itself from traditional parties in that it "seeks to change traditional Philippine politics rooted in patronage, personalities and promises to have a popular, program-based politics. It will give special attention to women by articulating, asserting and defending their rights." (5)

Many of the cadres of the new women's party belong to the militant left, including the national democratic current. Nevertheless, its representatives cover a rather broad political spectrum with, for example, newly-elected chairperson, Princess Tarhata Lucman, governor of Lanao (Mindanao) from the Liberal Party (Salonga wing).

The women's party has been met with great enthusiasm by many women, and with some doubts, too, by others. It represents a very original attempt to establish a women's party effectively involved in global popular struggles.

We are publishing here an interview with Maita Gomez, present secretary-general of KAIBA, held in August last year. Maita Gomez was at that time already vigorously engaged in the preparation of the launching of this party.

Likewise, we are reproducing sections of a speech given by the same woman leader while she served as chairperson of the Metro-Manila region of GABRIELA until she took on her present post. It deals with a critical history of the women's movement in the Philippines and gives important insights about the evolution of the struggle of women in this archipelago. The speech was delivered on the occasion of GABRIELA's Third National Congress, in March 1986. □

1. See 'International Viewpoint,' No. 114, February 23, 1987.

2. 'State Policies', the Constitution of the Philippines, adopted by the Constitutional Commission of 1986, Section 12, p. 3.

3. 'Statement of Common Position and Concern re: Constitutional Provision on the "Right to Life," August 1, 1986, Manila, mimeographed, p. 4.

4. Sr. Mary John Mananzan, 'Opening remarks' in 'Proceedings: International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines', (WISAP) February 25 - March 8, 1986; 'GABRIELA Third National Congress,' March 13-14, 1986, Quezon City, Philippines, p. 98.

5. 'Why a Political Party of Women? A Primer.'



Corazon Aquino (centre) at a 15,000-strong women's demonstration against Marcos, Manila 1983 (DR)

New women's party launched

IN THE 1970s, Maita Gomez became famous. A former beauty queen, she joined the New People's Army, the guerrilla force led by the Communist Party of the Philippines. After falling ill, she returned to Manila for treatment. She rapidly assumed a major role in the women's movement and the National Democratic left.

Last October, she became the general secretary of the KAIBA, the new women's party in the Philippines. The following interview was given by Maita to Sonia Rupon and Paul Petitjean on August 28, 1986, shortly before the launching of KAIBA.

Question. Can you explain why you decided to launch a women's party?

Answer. This party will assure the political education of women. It will prepare them to take part in the country's political life. It will participate in the elections. It will reinforce women's consciousness. The

women's party will not only seek to play a symbolic role. It will fight to win in the political competition. We want this party to be as strong as possible to force recognition of women's rights. It will be a party deeply committed to women's rights.

Why launch such a party today? Because there is an opportunity that has to be grasped. The women's movement is growing. The present situation in the Philippines is very different from that which prevails in other countries, where the political field is generally firmly occupied by a small number of traditional parties, making it very difficult for new electoral formations to develop.

Under martial law, the dictatorship created a political vacuum around itself. (1) Since the fall of the Marcos regime, there is no longer any dominant party in the country. The electoral traditions have to be reconstituted. Everywhere there is a lack of trained and recognized political cadres. There is a vast free space open to new parties.

This is a rare opportunity that cannot be allowed to go by. The situation is exceptional in many respects. We do not claim that what we want to do here may be appropriate in other countries, in other circumstances. But we are convinced that it is possible and necessary today to launch a women's party.

Q. Could members of the women's party belong to other political parties with a compatible program?

A. No. The party will be made up only of women, and dual membership will not be recognized. (2) Our initiative would lose all its meaning if people belonged to the women's party "in addition to" something else.

We will run candidates in the local elections, and sometimes in the regional ones for governorships, or even in national elections. We will run these candidates to get them elected, not to elect the candidates of another party. We will support progressive male candidates where we are weak. We will demand that the other parties support our candidates where we are stronger.

Of course, the members of the women's party will participate in coordinating bodies and movements such as GABRIELA, the Nationalist

1. The Philippines was officially under martial law from 1972 to 1981. But emergency rule lasted in fact until February 1986, when the Marcos dictatorship was overthrown.

2. KAIBA is open to any woman who "commits herself to the goals and ideals of the party," "denies membership in any other political party" and meets a minimum of organizational requirements, according to the conditions for membership set down in October 1986, see "Why a Political Party of Women? A Primer."

Alliance, the Bayan coalition of mass organizations, trade unions and associations.

Q. What program will the women's party candidates run on?

A. We want to show the contribution that women are making to the life of the country. We want their voice to be heard, their rights not to be ignored. Women must be made a real political power in Filipino society.

The women's party will put forward the specific demands of women. But it will not limit its activity to the specific area of women's rights. It will collaborate closely with the various cause-oriented movements and people's organizations, which will be its natural allies. Women's power is an integral part of people's power.

The women's party will fight for the people; it will address itself to the popular strata and to the middle layers. It will put forward a general nationalist and popular program to assure the dignity, rights and equality of all.

Q. How will you combine women's demands and general demands?

A. In struggle. There are distinct demands concerning women and other layers of society. But I do not think there is any dichotomy between the two levels of activity. You can see that in the struggle. Poor women are fighting here for their daily bread, their "rice and fish". That is perfectly normal. But it immediately poses problems of organization (childcare, etc) and that creates a collective experience that raises new questions, shakes up traditional values.

I know that it won't all happen in isolation. Women are the "first and last proletarians." That, indeed, is why we are launching the women's party. But you can't have a static vision of things. The women's movement exists. It will grow.

Our party has first to put down roots, to win a genuinely broad base. You have to know how to organize. I learned that in my life as an activist. We will start by agitating on immediately popular questions. We will be radical in action, but we will be less so in our program on a series of questions such as abortion and divorce.

However, one day we will face these questions head on, even at the expense of losing some popularity among the middle classes. Abortion is common among poor women, who can be easily criminalized.

A new generation has come into struggle, in the countryside, in the shantytowns, in the factories, in the society. Through its own experience it will advance beyond the high-point reached by the previous generations. □

The history of women's organizations

THE FOLLOWING speech was given by Maita Gomez to the Third National Congress of GABRIELA on International Women's Day last year.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, through time, all over the world, has been through many peaks and troughs. Nevertheless it survives, continues to grow and increasingly fulfills for us a worldview that corresponds to the actual realities of our experience as women; realities that we have always been denied by the predominant male bias that defines social questions and solutions.

The phenomena of imperialism and colonialism cut through our common experiences as women. Our experience of foreign domination continues to define, deny, complicate and exacerbate our struggle to survive and our right to liberation. The struggle to end imperialist control of Philippine life is paramount to Filipino women.

No facet of Philippine life has ever been separate from this struggle to be self-determining as a people. And our women's movement, its history and current evolution is no exception. From the Spanish colonial period, the times of our heroine Gabriela Silang, women's organizations in the Philippines have been offshoots or developments of national and political movements that enhanced or augmented different standpoints to the question of Philippine independence and sovereignty.

There are three important points that I would like to make in connection with this observation:

First, that these movements were begun and dominated by men. Being generally confined to the home (especially during the 300 years of Spanish colonialism), women's access to information and discussion, and thus their social awareness and influence was severely limited.

Second, that women's involvement in these movements gave them liberties and roles that were traditionally denied them. Philippine history bears witness to many women leaders who

capably and willingly accepted these non-traditional roles. But in these struggles we do not yet see a woman's consciousness distinct from that of men's perceptions to social problems. Although these women inevitably developed the movements they led with their own ideas, a view on social questions particularized from a women's point of view is more or less absent. It is also significant to note that the leadership of these women was most legitimized when it carried the stamp of authority derived from their men. Thus Gabriela Silang led the rebellion she inherited from her slain husband, and today Cory Aquino proclaims, "Let us continue Ninoy Aquino's fight!"

Third, that the goals and objectives of these movements were valid for a greater or smaller section of Filipino women that represented different standpoints to the question of Philippine independence. Needless to say, 300 years of struggle that culminated in the Philippine revolution against Spain and later the Philippine-American war was the answer to an immediate and urgent demand of the Filipino people, including Filipino women.

Women's movements during US colonialism

A lesser dimension of this third point is demonstrated by the women's movements during the American colonial period, when women's organizations were established as part of the American "pacification" campaign against the Philippine revolutionaries, and later to seek suffrage and reforms within the framework of American domination. The women's movements and organizations in this period were party to the legitimation of a new and more sophisticated form of colonial domination.

This was the era of selling American "democracy" to the Filipino people, the elite democracy where the Filipino ruling class would consolidate its recent access to political and economic power in collaboration with the new colonial master. It was the women of this elite who led the various women's suffrage and reform that were part of a trend to seek liberalization and political rights from the colonial master, a trend which by design failed to call attention to the illegitimacy of the colonial presence in Philippine life. It was a subtle brand of political mendicancy and collaboration promoted by the Filipino ruling class, which had already made a break with the Philippine

revolution.

Since that period, and progressively, as US-style democracy and a semi-colonial status were legitimized, women's organizations have taken the pattern of clearly auxiliary organizations to enhance the status quo: posing as moral guardians of society, promoting inutile reforms, glorifying charity work, drumming up support for the causes of the ruling elite, even for the dictatorship that has just fallen, and reinforcing the role of women as wife, homemaker and auxiliary to men. These women's organizations with their moralistic, elitist and condescending programs, even when they attempt to take up women's issues, cannot address themselves to the progressive and democratic demands of Filipino women. Today, the majority of women's organizations outside of the nationalist and cause-oriented movements still maintain this profile.

In the early '70s the re-emergence of another revolutionary women's organization occurred during the period of nationalist and student activism that we now call the First Quarter Storm.

True to the pattern discussed earlier, MAKIBAKA also developed from a predominantly male-led activist movement: its origins can be traced to the militant youth organization, the Samahan ng Demokratikong Kabataan (SDK). As part of the national democratic movement, the women of MAKIBAKA sought not only to mobilize women for a national democratic struggle, but also to develop a women's consciousness. A distinct women's movement integral to the national liberation struggle, MAKIBAKA, the Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan, was the first movement in Philippine history to raise the issue of women's liberation. The emergence of MAKIBAKA signifies the most advanced revolutionary tradition of Filipino women.

With the imposition of martial law, activist and nationalist organizations were declared illegal and forced to go underground. Temporarily, the open mass movement was effectively stifled. The women of MAKIBAKA answered the call for revolutionary underground work, for urban and rural basic masses organizing, for armed struggle. The pressures of martial law on the national democratic movement caused the disbanding of the still young and struggling MAKIBAKA. But the tradition that this women's organization has left behind remains.

Let us talk of our own women's movement, the women's organizations of today, many of which are only 3-5 years old. They too have grown out of the national struggle,

out of the struggles of different sectors and classes of Filipinos. Many of these organizations also began with little or no understanding of women's issues. Like our forerunners in the Katipunan, we simply saw the need for women to be involved. We were also drawn by the goals and objectives that represent the most urgent demands of the Filipino people: human rights, economic and civil rights, social justice, democratic structures and policies and an end to foreign domination.

In this process, with the tradition of MAKIBAKA to start from, with the voices of many women clamoring to be heard not just as Filipinos, but as Filipino women, with the advances of the women's movement in other countries to learn from, our women's movement has begun to see the Philippine problem as expressed particularly in the oppression of Filipino women; it has begun to see the exploitation and oppression of Filipino women in its entirety.

Organizing the mass women's movement

Women's organizations of the basic masses (the workers, peasants and urban poor) form the backbone of our women's movement. These organizations are vital to any women's movement's claims to legitimacy in terms of representing the demands and aspirations of the most oppressed women in Philippine society, of the majority of Filipino women. Women's alliances such as GABRIELA promote the solidarity and support of various issue-oriented, class or sector-based women's organizations. GABRIELA also functions as a center for coordinating and expanding women's campaigns. As it grows, it should and is developing into an educational, informational, propaganda and mobilization center, acting as a political center for the women's mass movement. It is a powerful vehicle for unifying women in perspective and action.

Over a decade of political activism under the harshest conditions of repression and dictatorship has provided our women's organizations with organizational skills and political acumen to lead and further develop the women's movement. We should be proud of this strength acquired through dedication and commitment, even as we recognize a weakness, or rather a lopsidedness, in our development as activists. While our involvement in the nationalist struggle has given us the decided advantage to

swiftly build a women's movement such as we have today, this same experience has only lately been infused with an orientation that recognizes the distinctness of women's oppression.

Our women's movement has to address itself to more intensive social investigation into the conditions of women in Philippine society and conduct research on the nature of specific women's problems as reflected in the lives of Filipino women. The more thorough study and firm grasp of the nature, manifestations and roots of women's oppression in Philippine society are among the most urgent agenda for our women's mass movement.

Our development as a women's movement should also evolve forms of organizing and mobilization better suited to develop women's fullest participation in the struggle of the Filipino people in general and the Filipino women in particular. The organization of cooperative day-care centers, the creation of women's desks in mixed organizations are already steps in this direction. Our social investigation must also give birth to new sections of women organizing: women domestic workers, workers' wives, non-factory wage earners, part-time workers, self-employed women. The women's viewpoint of our national situation must be comprehensively developed.

Today, just after the dictatorship has fallen, we have begun again to breathe the air of liberty. But we must continue to be on our guard because a strong fascist bloc associated with the dictatorship, though at the moment forced to toe the liberal line, still persists in power.

Democracy in our country has always been under tremendous pressure and remains tenuous against the power and maneuverings of the imperialist aggressor that seeks to keep our people in poverty, and promotes fascism and dictatorship to protect its illegitimate interests and prerogatives, which stand contrary to our survival and progress.

The basic question for centuries of Philippine history — that of independence and self-determination — remains unsolved. Conditions today are only more favorable to continue the struggle for Philippine liberation.

We will continue to seek every opportunity to advance the cause of freedom for our people and the liberation of Filipino women. We will not be co-opted into complacency. We will struggle hard to protect our gains and forward our cause. We will not cease now to work in the daylight, even as we have learned to toil in the dark years of dictatorship from which we have just emerged. □

A triple oppression

SOME WOMEN have become prominent symbols of the South African people's challenge to the apartheid system. What is the specific place of women under this racist and repressive system? Are there women's demands that are beginning to be raised in the course of the struggle against apartheid and exploitation?

PHILOMENA O'MALLEY

It is not easy to look at the particular place of women in South Africa because racial categorization tends to submerge social stratification, and the oppression of women is shaped by the overall complexity of racist institutions.

South Africa is a developed and industrialized country. Because the racial segregation originating in the colonial era has continued there are a social superstructure, prejudices and ways of life that date from the history of the country. The continuation, in certain cases, of a very strong sexual division of labour in rural families, and sometimes also in urban areas, creates particular contradictions in the present crisis of South African society and the struggles for emancipation.

A thorough examination of the position of women would imply showing the differences between the position of "Coloured", "Indian" and "African" women. The differences range from an African woman left to look after the family on a bantustan [tribal homeland], while her husband works hundreds of miles away living in a hostel in one of the urban areas; to women living in outlying townships and travelling to work as cleaners, maids, factory workers or to other low-paid jobs in white areas. Or a Coloured or Indian woman working as a teacher, secretary or salesgirl and living in an area reserved to her "race".

All these women experience apartheid in a different way. An effective challenge to women's oppression would require breaking down the barriers that exist so that experiences could be shared and joint demands formulated. But this will not happen separately from unification of the popular movement in general. It is not easy to overcome a century of racial

segregation, repression and prejudices.

Black women in South Africa suffer a triple oppression. (1) As well as the oppression by race and class, there is the specific oppression of women in the reproductive sphere and their super-exploitation at work. The repressive laws of the apartheid regime have partly destroyed the traditional African family and caused new problems for women.

The family in crisis

A study on the family in *Work in Progress (WIP)*, No. 27, 1983, showed quite clearly that the family as an institution is in crisis for the whole of South African society. One indication of this is the rise in the divorce rate for all sectors of the population since 1977: up by 149% for Coloureds, 73% for whites and 74% for Indians. The nuclear family of mother, father and children is not very often a reality for most Blacks in South Africa. In Soweto, for example, 60% of children live in single parent families, and it is estimated that 60% of African children in urban areas are "illegitimate". (2)

The form taken by the Black South African family today is largely a result of the workings of the apartheid system. The system of bantustans and migrant labour and the restrictions on Black families settling in the white urban areas create impossible problems for women.

Some 57% of African women are imprisoned in this life on the bantustans, in which conditions have worsened in the last twenty years. Since the introduction of a one-year contract system in 1968, male workers have

had to return to their jobs in the urban area within 28 days. Prior to this, they were able to take breaks from their employment, and one survey shows that the average time they remained with their families was anything from three to eighteen months. (3)

The general pattern of life on the bantustans is for the women, children and men past working age to be living together. Most estimates show half the able-bodied male workforce to be absent at any one time. The tribal system still influences how life is organized in these "Black homelands". In the traditional tribal system, the important decisions are taken by men. In the situation when the women are, in fact, playing the role of "head of the household", this creates tensions.

Whether it is a case of deciding which crops should be planted when and where, or whether an ill child should be taken to hospital, these decisions cannot wait for the annual four-week visit. Rural doctors quote cases of children dying because women do not dare agree to sending them to hospital without consent from their husbands — too far away to be reached in time. (4)

Yet it is women who are forced to take the major responsibility for looking after the family. This means that they have to take on not only all the traditionally female tasks connected with cooking, cleaning, and so on, and in the most arduous conditions drawing water from wells and carrying home firewood, but they also have to support the family materially. The remittances sent home by the migrant workers are not enough.

As fewer and fewer rural families have land or cattle, this often means that the women are forced to find work. This can be as super-exploited workers in the factories that have moved close to the bantustans under the government's policy of "decentralization", as daily or seasonal farmworkers, or in the informal sector.

The sort of work done in the informal sector, selling beer and vegetables or making and selling brooms and baskets, is extremely time-consuming and shows very little return on the amount of time invested. But for many it is the only way to earn money and so constitutes one of the

1. Black is used today in the sense of non-white. In other words, Coloureds, Indians and Africans in the racist classification consider themselves as oppressed, that is Black.

2. Cited in 'Work in Progress' No. 27, 1983

3. 'WIP' No. 27, "Aspects of family breakdown" by Sheena Duncan.

4. 'WIP' No. 27, "Apartheid and Family Life" by Joanne Yawitch.

largest areas of economic activity. Younger women may also leave the bantustans in order to go into the illegal underground or the cities, which seem to offer better opportunities, often returning from time to time to leave another illegitimate child at home.

Women are employed in the bantustan industries in appalling conditions. The financial inducements for the employers to move their factories to the bantustans include the ability to fix wages without reference to the minimum set by the wage boards. One sweet manufacturer lowered wages from 48 rand per week to 40 rand per month in the course of "decentralization". (5) Around half of the workers in the "bantustan industries" are women, driven to accept the conditions by their desperation to earn an income for their families.

Agricultural work is a traditional sector of African women's work. However, between 1960 and 1980, one and a quarter million Blacks were moved off white farms towards the bantustans, in line with the apartheid system and the controls on the workforce as well as because of the increasing mechanization of farming. Subsequently, many of the men returned as single migrant workers without their families. Some women still work in agriculture, often as seasonal or daily labourers. Of the 18.7% of African women who are registered as agricultural workers, many are domestic servants on farms.

A striking feature of Black women from both the rural and urban areas quoted in the WIP study is the aggressive reaction to the way they are treated by men and the marked reluctance to marry again if they are widowed or divorced, putting into question the usual assumption that the restoration of the traditional

family structure is the general aspiration of women whose families have been divided by apartheid.

In urban areas too women are faced with a long and arduous day of work both outside and within the home. Here one of the main problems is the overcrowded conditions in which they have to live. In one study of 22 women workers working in the laundry industry, only one lived alone with her husband and children. (6)

The lack of family housing for Blacks was severely aggravated by the government's decision to freeze all building of family housing for Blacks in urban areas between 1968 and 1978. The estimates of the number of people forced to live in one four-room house in Soweto in the late 1970s varied from 7 to 29!

It is not surprising in this situation that many people attempt to build their own homes in the shanty towns that spring up around the main urban centres. But the state policy of systematically destroying the shanty towns destroys these families' attempts at any sort of life together. Women are sometimes forced to abandon their children because a single woman can often find some sort of lodging, with relatives or friends, unavailable to a woman with children.

This overcrowding turns the "family home" into a site of conflict and tension when added to the other strains of urban life — crime, poverty and increasing unemployment. Alcoholism and wife-battering are common results of this situation.

Black women working in urban areas carry an equally heavy burden to their sisters in the bantustans. The mass entry of Black women into the waged workforce is relatively new, but has recently risen extremely rapidly — by 51.7% between 1973 and 1981. Black women, as the last

section of the South African population to enter the workforce, are usually coming in at the bottom to replace the Black men or white and Coloured women who are moving upwards. This means that they are in the most labour-intensive, low-paid and monotonous jobs.

Since 1970 the percentage of African women workers in agriculture has dropped by over 27%, and risen in manufacturing, commerce and, most importantly, services (by 16.4%, more than a half of African women workers are now in this sector). Included in the service sectors are those Black women working in domestic service.

In 1980, one-third of African waged women workers were domestic servants. Nevertheless, there is an overall decline in the number of domestic servants as the effects of the economic crisis on the white bourgeoisie makes servants' wages more frequently an area for economies. In 1946, 93% of all service workers were domestic servants, while in 1970 they accounted for only 71%. However, this decline is offset by the fact that employment in the service sector as a whole is increasing as many tasks previously carried out in private homes are moving into the market sector (for example the growth in dry-cleaning services, laundrettes and so on).

African women in domestic service

Domestic servants are either resident on the employers' premises or live out in the Black townships. In both cases they are low-paid and work long hours. Average wages by 1980 had risen to around 50 rand per month, although some highly skilled women servants might receive 80 to 100 rand. (7) Although live-in servants usually work longer hours, including weekends, women who have to travel to and from the Black townships may spend 3 to 4 hours per day travelling. This type of domestic service is tending to increase as the stricter controls on Blacks living in white areas is making it more difficult to find accommodation for live-in domestic workers. On the other hand, the prospect of accommodation provided can be an attraction to women.

5. 'South Africa Labour Bulletin', December 1983, introduction by Jacklyn Cock. One rand is equivalent to 2.09 US dollars at current exchange rates.

6. 'WIP', op. cit.

7. 'Segregation and Interpersonal Relations', Eleanor Preston-Whyte, "The nature of domestic service", page 167.

Winnie Mandela, one of the best known fighters against apartheid (DR)



All women working in the white areas are faced with this long travelling time, added to their day at work and their work in the home. Many African women workers are in jobs not that different from the tasks they performed as servants. Whether in the commercial or service sector they are likely to be at the bottom of the pile, as cleaners or canteen staff. Jobs as sales assistants, secretaries and bank clerks — those where contact with the public is the major feature — tend to be given to Coloured or Indian women. This is an indication of how racial and sexual stratification both play their role in job segregation.

African women's entry into the industrial workforce is taking place at a rapid rate. In 1970, 3.5% of African women were in this sector, representing 6.2% of the manufacturing workforce. In 1980, 10.7% of African women were in manufacturing.

Within this general category they are concentrated in the clothing and food sectors particularly, but to a lesser extent in the leather, wood and chemicals industries. (8) Whether they work alongside men or not, women are subject to blatant discrimination. In one factory women who chatted to their fellow workers, even while continuing to work, were subject to disciplinary action, and had to sign a book when they went to the lavatory. This discipline did not apply to men. Adrienne Bird, an organizer of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, writing in the *South Africa Labour Bulletin* of July/August 1985, cited a case of women workers who earned between 22 and 33 rand a week, while men in similar jobs earned 49 to 52 rand per week. One woman who asked for a rise was told to go and sleep with men in a nearby hostel to step up her earnings!

It is the women in the production industry, living in urban areas who are best placed to participate in the popular movement challenging the apartheid system. Although noteworthy efforts have been made to unionize domestic workers — for example the 40,000-strong union affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which was formed in October 1986 — it is women in production, in collective workplaces, who will constitute the backbone of women's participation in the independent trade-union movement, a movement which has a special importance in the struggle of the Black population in South Africa.

One measure of this movement's ability to effectively represent the Black working class as a whole will be its response to the particular

Women unite against rape

ON MAY 3, 1986, 59-year old Maliwe Glass was raped and assaulted in the Port Alfred African township. A man was identified and arrested as the rapist. Later that day he was set free without being charged.

The following day, the Port Alfred Women's Organization (PAWO), grouping most of the township women, held its regular meeting. There they decided that, as women, they would protest against the police attitude to the rape. At the same time they decided to protest against the arrest of five students, which had occurred two days previously while they were collecting money for school funds.

PAWO decided to organize a stayaway from work starting on May 5, until the rapist was arrested and the students released. They asked white women to contact them so that they could explain the reasons for their action. The stayaway was supported by all the African women, but no Coloured women from the nearby township. Almost all the women were domestic servants, with some factory and shopworkers.

On the Tuesday of the stayaway three PAWO members and several other leaders of community organizations were arrested. PAWO women were released, but a woman youth leader was held for two weeks. During this time she was interrogated about the stayaway. The police refused to believe the women had organized it.

After two days the Employers Federation approached the township civic association to discuss the situation. PAWO rejected any attempt by men on either side to negotiate: "Rape is not a men's issue", they said.

The response from the white women remained unsympathetic for a week. Only then did a delegation of white women go to meet PAWO and show some understanding of their situation. After this communication was established the women decided to go back to work. The rapist, known for his previous attacks on women, was given a police escort during the stayaway, but was eventually charged with assault. His house has been burnt down and he no longer lives in the township.

The stayaway was important in building the confidence of the women in themselves and their young organization (launched in March 1986). It brought the rape question into the open and increased community consciousness of it as another form of oppression and an attack on women's rights and dignity.

problems of Black women workers: low pay, unequal pay, grossly inadequate maternity rights and childcare provision, sexual abuse and discriminatory treatment at work, and the continuing assumption by their male fellow workers that it is normal that women carry the burden in the home.

One forum in which some of these problems were aired was a workshop organized by COSATU's forerunner, FOSATU, in July 1983, addressed by four well-known women trade-union activists, and reported in the *South Africa Labour Bulletin* of December 1983. The speakers outlined the position of Black women in industry as being in the worst-paid and most insecure sectors of the economy and in the least skilled jobs. This means that their bargaining power is relatively weak because of the ease by which the employers can find other women among the high numbers of unemployed who will accept any conditions in order to have a job. (9) Maggie Mugubane, general secretary of the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union, pointed out that women's willingness to accept such conditions is also a potential point of conflict and division between male and female workers, and illustrates the necessity for the independent movement to challenge the conditions of women

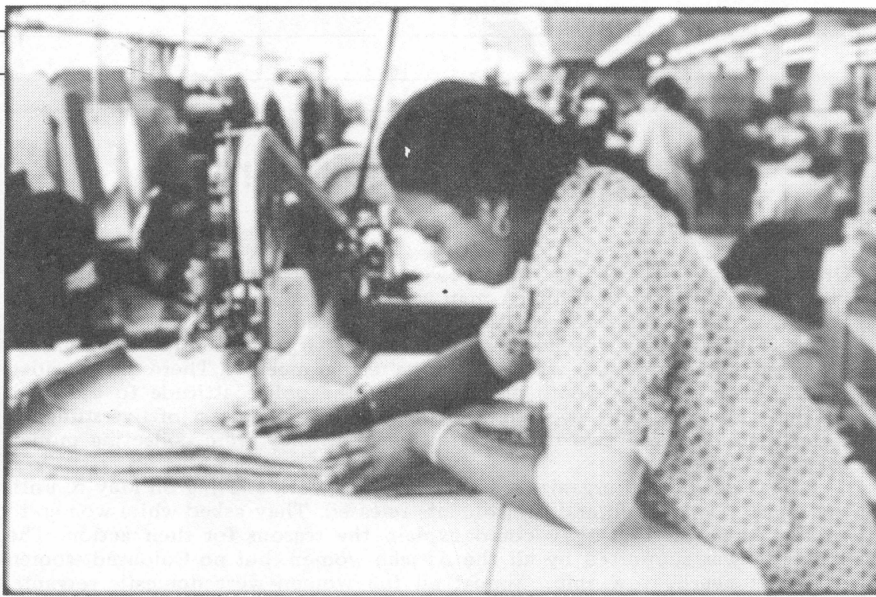
workers to maintain unity in its own ranks.

Speakers also raised questions such as the fight for maternity benefits, against unsafe contraception and the use of sexual harassment by foremen and employers to bully women workers, which are the beginning to be taken up by some unions.

Tembi Nabe (an organizer for the Metal and Allied Workers Union) frankly confronted the problems of women's double or triple workshift. She described the household life of the average woman worker as endless rounds of providing tea and food for her husband, looking after the baby, the fire, the ironing and so on while her husband feels free to watch television and read the newspaper "always with his little darling bottle of whisky beside him . . . When he gets to bed he then starts to demand another overtime from you (the third overtime). If you refuse him, that's when the divorce starts, and then his 'little darling' makes him think to batter you."

8. 'SALB', December 1983.

9. In the 1980 census 78% of African women were classified as "not economically active". As well as the very young and very old, this includes "housewives" who are inhibited from taking jobs because of their domestic responsibilities.



Black women in industry are in the lowest paid unskilled jobs (DR)

A later speaker, Lydia Kompe of the Transport and General Workers Union, referred to the same problems in raising the lack of women's participation in the trade unions, even in unions with a majority of women members they are rarely in the top leadership. She also pointed out the fear of sexual attack that makes women wary of going out at night, and the problems of husband's jealousy or lack of understanding of why women want to be active in the trade unions.

Maggie Mugubane raised the possibility of women organizing in a women's caucus or other structure in the unions to help women gain more confidence.

COSATU, the "superfederation" of well over half-a-million workers, committed itself at its founding conference in November 1985 to fight for women's rights on all these fronts. (10) FOSATU and its affiliated unions, before the creation of the COSATU, had already started to fight on some of these questions, such as for a minimum living wage and equal pay, rejecting the notion of a "family wage" for men, and for the retention of protective legislation so that women could not be forced to do nightwork or overtime, along with a reduction in the working week.

The problem of how to deal with redundancies is more difficult, the unions having the traditional position of "last in, first out", which, as everywhere, tends to discriminate against women. (11) But the fight for maternity rights, including paid maternity leave to count towards seniority, which does not exist in South Africa, would go some way towards resolving this problem.

Women workers are also women of their communities, and the links of trade-union women with other women's organizations will be important in the progress towards the women of South Africa creating a

movement which can speak for them on all fronts. Given women's central responsibility for the household, the forms of struggle of the Black communities — boycotts of the schools, rent paying or of white commerce — require a particular involvement from women.

Women in the community associations

The "triple oppression" they suffer often means that they are the least-organized section of the residents in the townships, and therefore the least involved in taking the decisions on these forms of action. Yet it is the woman who, to provide the food on the table as expected, will have to do her shopping in the township, rather than in cheaper big white supermarkets, or else risk confronting the young men "supervising" the boycott.

Women are organizing at the level of the community. The Fedtraw (Federation of Transvaal Women) was one organization participating in the National Assembly of Women in Johannesburg on August 9, 1986. (12) This conference brought together 1,200 women of all races and of diverse backgrounds, although unfortunately no trade-union speakers were invited as such. The assembly was organized by around 30 organizations, some linked to the white liberal current, but others affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF). This assembly adopted a number of resolutions on women's right to work and training, social security for all, obligatory child maintenance payments, an end to discrimination against pregnant women, release of those arrested during the school boycott, redistribution of land and so on. It was characterized by a clear anti-apartheid

sentiment and a desire to take concrete action.

Fedtraw has 23 affiliated organizations, most affiliated to the UDF, and some 50 local branches in Soweto alone. Its three main areas of activity before the state of emergency were rents, the school boycott and against military presence in the townships.

Under the state of emergency Fedtraw has had to ease up a bit on its work, in particular suspending plans to relaunch Feosaw (Federation of South African Women). But Fedtraw patron, Albertina Sisulu, believes women's groups must be and are maintained "so we are not caught sleeping when the state of emergency is lifted". (13)

Susan Shabangu, an organizer for the TGWU present at the conference, agreed that rent and education were important subjects for women and that women are becoming more mobilized around community issues. Both the Fedtraw activists and the unionists agreed that women were becoming increasingly politicized under the impact of events: as mothers of children boycotting schools, household managers involved in rent or consumer boycotts, residents protesting against military presence in townships, as wives whose husbands lose their jobs and as workers suffering a special discrimination.

Fedtraw women both in urban and rural areas are involved in agricultural clubs, buying cooperatives, sewing clubs and health education, even under the difficult conditions of the state of emergency, which makes meetings difficult and has forced some activists to go into clandestinity.

Black women in South Africa are beginning to organize to make their voices heard and raise their particular needs as women. This is beginning to have an impact within the independent trade-union movement, which is starting to act on such demands as equal pay and maternity rights, and in the communities, where women's committees and groups are starting up so that women can come together. Women's issues are on the agenda and it is increasingly recognized that a movement fighting for the emancipation of the South African people from the racist and repressive apartheid society has to fight for all sections of the people. □

10. See "Resolutions of the founding congress of COSATU" in 'International Viewpoint' No. 93, February 24, 1986.

11. For a discussion of the problems this poses, see Adrienne Bird, "Organizing women workers in South Africa", 'SALB', July/August 1985.

12. This is National Women's Day in South Africa, the anniversary of the 1956 women's demonstration against the extension of the pass laws to women.

13. 'Weekly Mail', Johannesburg, August 8-14, 1986.

Women's quotas in brewery union

FOR THE FIRST time in Denmark - perhaps even in the whole of Western Europe - women in a trade union have managed to win a sexual quota in the election of the leadership. Likewise, they have managed to win an agreement with the employers that in future equal numbers of men and women will be hired.

The objective is to get an equal number of men and women employed and to get the concept of men's and women's work dropped, which means equal access to all jobs.

KARIN PEITERSEN

The union is the Copenhagen brewery workers' union, and the workplaces concerned are two big breweries, Carlsberg and Tuborg, where there are 2,700 workers, of whom 700 are women. Until January of this year, the men and women organized in separate trade unions.

In 1903, the women brewery workers organized. But since they were not accepted by the men, they had to form their own union. The reason given for not accepting women into the existing union was that they pushed down wages and took jobs away from men.

The same reason was given when women factory workers wanted to join the factory workers' union.

So, they had to organize their own Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund (Women's Labor Union). This union still exists. It has 100,000 members, all unskilled workers who work in factories or as cleaners.

Women-only union

In contrast to the women brewery workers, the leadership of the Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund is holding on to the principle of a union for women only. They defend this by saying that so long as there is not equality in

Denmark, there is a need for women-only unions. Otherwise, women's demands would be overlooked, and women would have difficulty in being represented, as shown by the experiences in unions that have both male and female members.

The brewery workers solved this problem by adopting a quota for women - not only in the leadership of the union but at the level of the factory organization and in the election of shop stewards. At the same time, it was established that in order to change this rule two-thirds of the women voting would have to vote for the change.

On January 1, the men's and women's workplace organizations fused. If more than a third of the members of a workplace organization are women, at least a third of the places in that organization's leadership must go to women. There is to be an equal number of male and female shop stewards. The quota for representation in the leadership also applies to men. If the number of men or women is under a third, but more than 10 per cent, then the minority is to be assured at least one place in the leadership.

All shop stewards are automatically members of the workplace organization leadership, and if the women are under-represented in accordance with the new rules, additional representatives are to be elected from the women shop stewards and deputy shop stewards.

The day-to-day leadership of the union consists of four elected officials of whom two are to be of each sex. This is in line with the objective of having an equal number of men and women workers.

The two unions had been dis-



cussing fusion for more than 20 years. But, during this time, there had been very big conflicts. In particular, women were very bitter about the fact that it was their jobs that disappeared when automation was introduced into the breweries in the 1950s and 1960s. And the new jobs were taken by men.

In some breweries outside Copenhagen, women disappeared altogether from the production departments. In Aarhus, Denmark's second biggest city, for example, there are only 37 women brewery workers left, and they still have their own union.

However, in Copenhagen, the women managed to get an agreement with the employers and the male workers that if women's jobs were automated, the women workers would be kept on. Moreover, equal pay was introduced, which means that people are paid the rate for the departments they are in and not for the specific jobs they hold.

In this way, women managed to hold their jobs in the breweries, even if today they constitute only a quarter of the workforce. But there is also a possibility now for changing that. The brewery employers calculate that with the natural departures from the workforce and the new hiring, in the year 2007 there will be an equal number of men and women workers.

However, the guarantee that this will happen is not going to be provided by the employers but by the brewery workers themselves. It is their solidarity and activity that will assure not only that women are hired, but also men.

The number of brewery workers has fallen drastically as a result of rationalizations and the introduction of new technology. Shortly after the end of the Easter strikes in 1985, the brewery workers at Carlsberg and Tuborg in Copenhagen went out on a 10-week-long conflict under the slogan "technology must make our work easier, not eliminate us." The demand was for a shorter work-week and jobs for all.

The brewery workers did not win their strike against the bosses, but they did improve the solidarity between men and women, and open up the way for a common union. During the strike, common meetings were held for men and women, and there was a joint union strike committee. The unions organized together around all the strike actions.

Women played a very active role in organizing blockades in front of the breweries and in collecting money for the strikers. The brewery workers are convinced today that a common union will give them new strength, and that they will be better able to take on the bosses. □

Cahiers du féminisme celebrates tenth birthday

THE *CAHIERS du féminisme* is a quarterly socialist-feminist journal published by the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR -- the French section of the Fourth International).

This year, the *Cahiers* celebrates its tenth anniversary. It remains one of a very few socialist-feminist magazines continuing to publish and flourish in the 1980s. To mark the occasion, Penny Duggan interviewed two members of the editorial committee, Josette Desbois and Anne-Marie Granger, about the history of the *Cahiers* and the political situation of women in France.

Question. What was the feminist movement doing at the time you decided to launch the Cahiers du Féminisme?

Josette. The Cahiers were launched in November 1977. We took this decision during our national women's conference in June 1977. To try and describe the political context in which the review came out I think there are three elements we should remember.

First of all there was the impact of the feminist movement at the time. The movement had been able to lead some very big mass struggles. We campaigned on two subjects in particular, abortion and contraception with meetings, demonstrations and so on in united-front type campaigns, and also on questions such as rape. The women's movement was therefore a fairly powerful movement even though it was structured in different ways such as the MLAC (movement for freedom of abortion and contraception).

At the time there were four to five hundred women's groups in France as a whole between five and seven thousand women were organized in non-mixed groups. The women's movement had also had an impact within the workers' movement. On May 1, 1977, there was a feminist contingent behind the trade-union banners involving 5,000 women, not just intellectuals but also lots of women trade-unionists who joined it at the end of the demonstration.

The sixth working women's conference of the CGT [trade-union federation led by the Communist Party], which took place at the end of May 1977, was a direct expression of the questions that concerned women in the workplaces. It dis-

cussed not only the super-exploitation of women workers but also how to challenge women's double workshift, the sexual division of labour, the problem of contraception, sexuality, abortion and so on. All the questions raised by the feminist movement were reflected in the trade-union movement in the CGT, and in the CFDT [trade-union federation of Catholic origin, with a largely social-democratic leadership]. So, there was a strong feminist movement.

The second factor was that the women's movement was divided on one thing -- the question of links with the workers' movement. There was one current influenced by radical feminism that was above all worried about being taken over by the trade unions and the workers' movement, and thus for them it was out of the question to have any joint activities or even to speak to the workers' movement dominated by men.

There was another part of the women's movement, in which we played an active role. We said that the point was not to be worried about being taken over but to do our best to encourage a convergence between the feminist movement as it was -- mainly public sector white-collar workers -- with working women, whether in the trade unions or not. We wanted to make this link on a feminist class-struggle basis. This required a constant battle by us in the women's movement and in the LCR.

The third factor is the overall political context. The March 1978 elections were coming up, which was a very important occasion for the left. In this context women were a very important electoral factor.

The traditional parties of the

left and the bourgeois currents tried to address women and to use them in the elections. So paradoxically there was a very favourable context for discussions on all the questions raised by the feminist movement.

There was a plethora of publications which came out at that time. *F* magazine came out in January 1978, just after the *Cahiers* was launched. It was representative of an "enlightened bourgeois" current, very much "of its time" and took up a series of questions raised by the feminist movement, such as abortion and contraception, which gave it a certain impact.

At the same time all the different feminist currents were putting out their own journals. For example, *Histoire d'Elles*. It aimed to have a feminist viewpoint on the whole scope of the current news, which was a different aim from most others. There were other journals that were more the expression of the women's groups, including the radical feminist current, such as *Questions féministes*.

The debate within the LCR also played an important role. How can a revolutionary organization participate in and be representative of feminist struggles and how it can introduce the changes in its organizational practice which allow women to fully participate in the organization at all levels? That was what we were discussing and the answers were not obvious at the time.

Overall, women's struggles were considered as important not only in context of the anti-capitalist struggle but also in the perspective of the struggle for a socialist society. In practice it was a permanent struggle to get what we call the "feminization" of the daily practice of the organization — to have this aspect taken into account at all times.

I'll tell you one quite revealing story. The decision to hold a national women's conference was taken during the second congress of the LCR, in January 1977. What does one find in the pamphlet containing the theses of this conference? An erratum: "Paragraph 10, Women's Struggles was unfortunately mislaid during the preparation of the definitive version of the theses for printing." This unconscious mistake is quite revealing.

We thought that there was a dual role for the *Cahiers*. On the one hand we could do our utmost to encourage this convergence between the struggle of women in general and that of women workers in particular, and on the other encourage the discussion within the LCR, be a motor and a stimulus for our feminist activity in general.

Q. What is your balance sheet 10 years later?

Subscriptions to the *Cahiers* cost 75F (surface mail) or 100F (airmail) for readers abroad. Write to 14, rue de Nanteuil, 75015 Paris



Josette. Again we should start with a quick survey of the political situation. Contrary to what we expected and hoped, the left's arrival in government, not in 1978 but in 1981, was not the signal for an upsurge in big mass struggles, but rather threw the whole of the workers' movement into disarray. This was for a series of reasons. Number one was the policy of the reformist parties in the government. From this point of view, the aim we had of playing a particular role between a dynamic feminist movement and the debates that could have arisen in the workers' movement in an upsurge was completely changed.

In 1979 the women's movement was involved in some important struggles to defend the abortion rights won in 1975. More than 50,000 people, a majority of whom were women, demonstrated in November 1979. Once the left were in power there was also a struggle to get the reimbursement of abortion by the social security, something that had been promised before the election. But we can't really say that there have been mass women's struggles during the last five years. We have rather been fighting step by step to keep what we had: the network of groups in Paris, the Women's Centre, the Family Planning association.

At the same time, in the workers' movement, there were discussions particularly involving women. A particular case was in Spring 1982 when almost all the staff of *Antoinette*,

the CGT's monthly women's magazine was sacked for not having followed to the comma the federation leadership's sectarianism to the CFDT and its support for Jaruzelski's coup in Poland. Women from the LCR, members of the CGT, and others, tried to broaden solidarity with the *Antoinette* women in the union movement and in the feminist movement. Some of the *Antoinette* women subsequently formed a new feminist discussion group the "Flora Tristan Circle".

Anne-Marie. Given this new situation, we rediscussed the content of the *Cahiers* in 1983. At the same time a number of new comrades became involved in the collective. It seemed to us that we needed a magazine that tried to look at some questions more deeply, without necessarily being tied to current events. This seemed to us true both for discussions with other feminist currents and also for the discussions in the organization. We decided to focus each issue on a special feature, which would be chosen mainly in relation to what was going on, but not solely. They would be basically on questions we wanted to go into more deeply.

For example, two years ago we had a feature on the question of new reproductive technologies, which at the time were not the subject of fierce debate as they are today. We considered that we had to discuss and elaborate these types of questions, and not leave them to be monopolized by the bourgeois press. We were one

of the first feminist magazines to take up the question.

Q. What was the reaction to the Cahiers within the women's movement? Was there any hostility to a revolutionary Marxist organization having its own journal? Were we accused of perhaps substituting for a broader publication of the class struggle current in the movement?

Josette. There was never a discussion on the journal as such. At the time when the women's movement was very strong there were always currents who reproached us for claiming to be fully-fledged feminists and members of a political organization. We took up the discussion on this quite frankly. For example in one of the first issues of the *Cahiers* in March 1978, we had an article "Women and Politics" in which we explained why we thought it was not only possible but useful, while not at all underestimating the contradictions and conflicts in being a feminist and a member of a political organization.

There is even less reason to criticize us for publishing our own journal as we have never pretended that it could be a publication of the feminist movement as a whole. LCR women have also been among those most enthusiastic for an independent journal of the women's movement.

Q. The situation has changed, and the Cahiers with it. What is the role today?

Josette. Yes it's true. Our role has changed but we are still a place for thought and discussion on all the problems women face.

Anne-Marie. We have played an important role on the question of waged work. Many women in the women's movement as it was did not see this as a big question, it was for the socialist feminists, belonging to a political organization. At the beginning of the 1980s, when the government began to promote part-time work, some feminists saw this as a gain, a new area of freedom for women, as a right to choose. We played an important role in showing the reality of this "choice". We sounded the alarm.

Our work obviously had an effect because in 1982 the women's movement took the initiative to organize "Etats Generaux" on women and work. The two days, filled with discussions and debates, were attended by 2,000 women of very different experiences. This assembly was organized by a section of the women's movement, from the Paris women's centre, the Family Planning and the CFDT.

Josette. There are other examples. We were among the first to note the

role of the young women of the second generation of the North African immigration in the developing anti-racist movement. When we look at the student and school-student movement, these young "second-generation immigrants" played an important role, and the women in particular. Our role is to draw attention, provoke thought and discussion. For example, the *Cahiers* drew the attention of our members to the question of the "increasing flexibility" of the workforce. Before it involved all workers, it was tried out on women. I think we helped the organization to understand this, and I think this was very important.

Q. How does the editorial committee function?

Anne-Marie. Like any other, except that we all have full-time jobs and we are all active politically. That means that the *Cahiers* are not separate from our activity in building the women's movement. We are all active in one way or another in the Family Planning, in trade unions, in women's groups, and that for us is inseparable from our work for the *Cahiers*. We should point out that the committee is completely composed of women! This is not a deliberate choice, it happens like that. We have some male contributors from time to time, but the committee is all women. We have already said that the journal should be led by women. At the moment, our readership is not the traditional readership of the other publications of the LCR. We can tell from the letters we receive and the sales we have. We also have the sing-


ularity of more or less breaking even financially!

Q. How do you explain the fact that the Cahiers still exist when almost all other feminist publications in France have disappeared?


Josette. First of all because of our conviction that women's struggles are not a question of passing fashion but a fundamental element of the struggle for human emancipation. Then because we are the publication of an organization. This might seem paradoxical but it is an important element. This gives us a distribution network, the minimum of back up without which any publication would be impossible. Without the material support of the organization, even at the financial level we could not exist. This is a political choice of the organization.

But over and above these purely material reasons, in a context in which the feminist movement is rather in decline, to be participating in a more global struggle allows us to escape the isolation felt by so many feminist activists. This political commitment can cause problems as we've already said, but it is a support to be part of a political organization which has an overall political perspective.

The other reason is that we have a political project: participating in building a mass autonomous women's movement. This explains why we work as we do, that we're not just intellectuals sitting in an office. In our workplaces, our trade unions, in different groups and associations we are continually working toward this aim. I think that these are the reasons why we are still going strong. □



الجمعية الاشتراكية
الفرنسية



الأسبوعية الاشتراكية (٢)
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“Work like a man, and also like a woman”

THE CONFERENCE of the Soviet Women's Union, held at the end of January 1987 in Moscow, clearly showed that the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe have desperately tried to hide behind their rhetoric on sexual equality for many years.

In the USSR, large numbers of women do the sort of jobs that men do not want — tiring manual work in industry, the building trade or agriculture. (In Siberia, some women workers on collective farms stagger under the weight of 60kg [132 lb.] sacks of food for the cattle.) In the mechanical engineering industry, 70% of the women workers are employed in unskilled jobs; only 1.3% have jobs with any responsibility.

With a population of 272 million, creche places in the USSR have not increased beyond 1.5 million. Alongside many other difficulties, women are forced to spend hours in queues each day to buy food and other everyday necessities. The following article looks at the context of women's daily lives in all the countries of Eastern Europe that proclaim themselves to be “socialist”.

JACQUELINE HEINEN

“We know perfectly well that nobody is going to liberate us from diapers or dishes, any more than from standing in those long lines and then dragging the groceries home. Besides, it's normal.”

“Say what you want about liberation, but the man's the breadwinner and the woman takes care of the home.”

The ramblings of our grandmothers? Not at all. The first statement figures prominently in a 1983 article in *Rabotnitsa*, one of the two main women's magazines in the Soviet Union. The second appeared in the March 8, 1981, International Women's Day editorial of *Lacznosc*, the official journal of the Polish trade unions.

These very same publications are quick to sing the praises of exemplary women workers, the pioneers who unhesitatingly tackle “men's work” while remaining perfect housewives. Only five lines earlier the Polish editorial stated: “We know what we have to do: we want to work outside the home because we are not resigned to our role in the family and all the housework. We are not going to allow ourselves to be confined to the kitchen or simply taking care of children.”

“Work like a man, and also like a woman” — so goes the saying. And

that pretty well sums up the very contradictory situation in which women find themselves in the Eastern European countries of “real socialism.”

Since World War II women have made very real progress in education, job opportunities, and participation in economic and social life. For the last twenty years, in all the Eastern European countries except Romania, women have comprised more than 40% of the workforce. With two small exceptions, this percentage topped 45% by the beginning of the 1980s, reaching more than 50% in the USSR and East Germany.

Yet, in spite of their longer-standing participation in full-time waged work, women in Eastern Europe remain oppressed — and in many of the same ways as women in the West: sex-segregated occupations, lower average wages, male sexual violence, unequal division of labor within the family, primary identification of femininity with motherhood, exclusion of women from powerful economic and political positions, and so on.

The experience of women in Eastern Europe dramatically demonstrates that integrating women into the workforce is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for women's emancipation. As feminists

have argued for some time now, this integration must be accompanied by a social and political process that leads to changes in women's situation in all areas, not just work outside the home.

These processes challenge traditional relations between men and women in the family and personal life, restructure how society cares for children and incorporates men fully into that realm, legitimize lesbian and gay sexuality and restore to women control over our reproductive capacity.

Such a challenge to male domination can only be the expression of the self-organization of women. But the entry of women into wage work has, of course, not been determined by the demands and needs of women themselves. Nor has it even been shaped by the political organization of the masses of women.

Eastern European women spend a good part of their lives in full-time wage work because their governments need their productive labor. To draw women fully into wage labor requires that they be given education and training, and at least some social support to relieve the burdens of domestic work and childcare. On the other hand, these supports are not only expensive, they also threaten to undermine the traditional nuclear family and power relations within it.

This contradiction between the need to use women's labor in production on the one hand, and the interest in maintaining the traditional family on the other hand, has very much shaped the policies of the Eastern European states.

Enormous variations between countries

It must be stressed that economic and social situations vary enormously from one country to the other. It is not possible to compare conditions of life for women in Czechoslovakia with those of Romanian women, for example.

Czechs live in a country where the stores are relatively well-stocked and where decent quality household appliances are available. Romanian women confront unprecedented scarcity, from rationing of all basic foodstuffs (bread, milk, sugar) to daily shutoffs of water, gas and electricity. No one takes the elevator anymore for fear of getting stuck. Picture the scene when you live in a high rise block and have grocery bags and a small child to lug upstairs.

It is forbidden in Romania to heat apartments above 14 degrees centi-

grade (57 degrees F) during a cold snap, and TV programming is down to two and a half hours a day. All this because the government has decreed it necessary to conserve energy.

These difficulties affect the entire population, but women are the main target, as shown by the discourses on model citizens in the pages of the party journal: "When push comes to shove, women can just as easily do the wash in the bathtub." So, we can give up washing machines. And brooms? "Didn't we use brooms for hundreds of years before we got vacuum cleaners?"(1)

Social services cannot be readily compared, either. Less than 10% of Polish women have their laundry done outside the home, given the high cost and the very low quality of the service, while in East Germany reliance on laundries is quite common. Similarly, the percentage of hot meals served in communal canteens in Poland is barely 10%, while it is 70-80% in East Germany. This makes a huge difference for women when they come home in the evening after a day's work.

Finally, while there is room for 65% of East German children under 3 years old in nurseries and 90% of children from three to six in child-care facilities, these figures are 4% and 5% respectively in Poland. Thus, it is practically impossible for Polish working women to place their small children in nurseries. The few places available are generally given to privileged women who are "recommended" and not to those who need it most — the very large number of women who work in shifts or at night.

Housing conditions also vary greatly from country to country. In the Soviet provinces, it is still common for an entire family to be living in a single room. By contrast, in Poland, while the housing shortage is acute, the waiting list for an apartment incredible (a "young" couple can remain on the list 15 to 20 years, if they are forced to go through official channels), in general the space allocation per person is much more liveable.

Despite these profound differences, what is striking in all these countries is the maintenance of patriarchal relations within the nuclear family, the persistence of ancient notions about women's role, the immutable domination of the man within the couple.

Household tasks and the education of children continue to be women's exclusive province. The number of hours they devote daily to these tasks has diminished only imperceptibly — 4-5 hours in 1970, and just a bit less in 1985, if we accept the most recent

statistics. As for men: "He'll make a half-hearted effort out of kindness. He'll take care of the baby. He'll help, blinded by his own generosity." (2)

Although women want to work and are not about to return to the home, most still seem to define themselves first as wives and mothers. In Poland, three quarters of all women interviewed in several studies said they were convinced that their fundamental task was the education of their children. And why be surprised at the tenacity of such ideas, when we know that in 1980 Soviet elementary schools trained girls in cooking and housework while boys took up wood and metalworking?

"The girls had to do everything"

This internalization of their role as mothers and acceptance of traditional marriage as the natural order to things seems to be as true of women in East Germany, even though their domestic load seems to be much lighter than that of women elsewhere.

This comes across clearly in the remarks of East German women who were asked to "reveal themselves" in free-flowing interviews.

"Sure, my parents were progressives. But the education we kids had was horrible. The girls had to do everything and the boys led the good life," said a young woman of 24.

"I have to do it all: advisory committees, the union, take care of the old people at home, all the administrative tasks," said another woman who is a little older, the mother of a child. But she nevertheless showed a lot of tolerance toward her husband when she said, "What good does it do a woman to liberate herself against her own partner? . . . If it breaks up the relationship, you just have to start another one, because relationships are inevitable. And the problems will start again with the new one." (3)

To understand this contradictory world view, which incorporates both aspirations for political and economic equality and acceptance of traditional gender identities, we have to consider the material barriers women face both individually and collectively which prevent the emergence of alternative attitudes and aspirations. Foremost among these difficulties is a consistent state policy which assumes that women and not men will be responsible for children.

Immediately after World War II, the regimes in Eastern Europe emphasized the importance of women's paid labor, because women's work

was needed to rebuild the economies. But official rhetoric in Leninist language stressed the connection between paid labor and women's elevation to full and equal participation with men in all social realms.

The state's obligation to free women from domesticity and child-rearing was accepted, even if only as a goal that could not be immediately implemented. But from the mid-'60s official policy on the family shifted substantially. This turnabout was accomplished through a variety of measures and rationales, but it had the universal effect of braking a process of development which tended to afford women increasing social and economic independence.

Beginning in 1965, in East Germany, domestic chores were no longer referred to as an obstacle to professional activity and training for women. The new approach resurrected the virtuous role of the family in the education of children.

Various measures then followed. Some were progressive, such as the extension of maternity leave from 12 to 20 weeks. Others, no matter how generous they may have seemed to women at the time, had a discriminatory impact. For they perpetuated the differential treatment of men and women as working parents, assuming that women were primarily responsible for children.

These measures included giving more vacation time to women with several children, providing single mothers with one vacation day a month to do their housework, and creating part-time work for "women who, because of their special family responsibilities, find it impossible to work full-time." (4)

Official reports confirm that few women take advantage of the opportunity to work part-time, since few can afford the cut in pay. But some specialists in East Germany estimate that 25-30% of working women have jobs in which the work week is shorter by six hours.

Of course, this does not reduce women's total workload. All studies in East and West Europe show that when women put in fewer hours in paid work, their husbands generally end up doing less around the house than they did before. Moreover, reduced hours almost always bring women a diminished status and a series of obstacles on the professional level.

In 1967 Hungary introduced the principle of paid leave to allow women

1. 'Scintea,' November 1, 1983.
2. "Women in Russia," 1980, *Edition des femmes*, 22.
3. "Guten Morgen du Schone," *Maxie Wander, Luchterhand*, 1985.
4. *Laws on work*, 1977.

to stay home with their children, establishing a kind of "maternity wage," amounting to nearly one-half of their regular pay. Four years later, Czechoslovakia launched a similar program of monthly maternity allowances for the child's first year. In Poland, beginning in 1969, unpaid leaves could be taken for one — later three — years. Shortly thereafter, it was proposed that these be paid leaves, and that has been the case since 1981. Officially they are called "parental" leaves, but everyone refers to them as maternity leaves, and not accidentally. In all these countries, three-quarters of women have access to these options.

In the Soviet Union, the story is a little more complex. Already as far back as 1934 the new Family Code made a sharp retreat from the gains of the 1917 revolution. It banned abortion (re-legalized in 1955), condemned the liberated marriage system and placed obstacles in the way of divorce.

But the war interrupted Stalin's plans to glorify the role of the woman-mother. First, during the war, women's labor was needed to replace that of the men at the front. After the war, their labor was necessary to reconstruct the war-torn economy. Stalin had to wait until 1949 to present a gold medal for meritorious "fertility."

Proposals to introduce part-time work appeared in the sixties, but only recently has the idea gained any real support. And the Soviets have also introduced a paid maternity leave of one year to eighteen months for mothers of young children.

Wage and job discrimination should come as no surprise in the light of these policies and the notions about women and domesticity that lie behind them. Women are concentrated in services and "helping professions," clerical work and traditionally female industries (textile, garment, electrical assembly). There are some differences with the West. The percentage of women doctors is much higher in Eastern Europe. But the profession has lost all its attraction for men, because the pay is so low. In the Soviet Union, women do heavy manual labor in areas like construction, taking jobs that men wouldn't hear of doing. Said a woman postal worker in Petrozavodsk:

"Here the proletariat is no longer an exploited class, but women are, and doubly so. You can't see it in the laws, but it exists in reality. According to the rules, we don't have the right to lift more than twenty kilos. So if the packages weigh less than that, around here they decide — god knows why — that we can lift an incalculable number of them. Here the norm is



300 packages per person per day, but around holidays it can go up to 500 packages. Each one weighs from seven to ten kilos. So each woman has to lift and carry more than 2,000 kilos a day, and between four and five tons on holidays. Around May 1 or November 7 (celebration of the glorious socialist revolution) we're breaking weight-lifting records here. And we don't even get all the glory the professional weight-lifters get." (5)

Female leadership is distrusted

In addition, each woman has to walk 2-5 kilometers a day with these packages, equivalent to dragging between 350-1,000 kilos a day. Not to speak of the fact that "women work nights in this district and the shifts are 12-hour stretches. It's about like working in the coal and salt mines before the revolution." (6)

But even the jobs that skilled women have do not at all correspond to their levels of training. Girls are almost always more numerous than boys in secondary schools, and often outnumber them in higher education as well. Far more females attend technical schools and receive technical training in the East than in the West.

In East Germany, where special efforts were made to achieve this, young girls made up three-quarters of the students in technical secondary schools in 1983. In Poland in 1984, 23% of the student body in advanced technical schools were women. This figure rarely exceeds 10% in the West.

Still, the women hold a very small number of administrative positions in the technical areas and women hold an insignificant proportion of all factory manager positions, even in sectors where women comprise the bulk of the workforce. Only a relative handful of women get prestigious academic appointments.

As usual, the traditional ideology is a formidable obstacle. Female leadership is distrusted. "She won't be able to do the job . . . and what if she decides to have a baby?" The facts — that most skilled women do not quit work after having a child, or that men have high rates of alcoholism which can also take them out of employment — don't shake these strongly-held prejudices (and the male privilege they justify).

It flows logically that salary differentials between men and women are in the order of 30%. This is a greater gap even than in the northern countries of Western Europe (Denmark, Sweden, and so on), where the level of female employment is close to that in Eastern Europe, but where the percentage of women working part-time is often quite high. This fact is peculiar, since we might expect the gap between men and women to be greater, not smaller than in Eastern Europe, where most women work full-time.

Maintaining, indeed enforcing, women's primary responsibility for childcare and household labor, the family policy of the Eastern European regimes has not only solidified women's subordinate position in the realm of paid labor. These measures

5. "Women in Russia," 22.

6. *Ibid.*

express the official renunciation of any policy aimed at achieving real equality between men and women. The break with the Marxist and Leninist tradition to which these regimes referred at the moment of their installation could not be more clear.

Certainly, Marx and Engels — and Lenin following them — stressed women's exploitation more than their specific oppression, convinced that the massive entry of women into paid labor, appearing to have begun in the capitalist countries from the middle of the 19th century, would lead to the break-up and then the disappearance of the traditional family. In so doing, they underestimated the capacity of the ruling class to intervene in order to regulate the employment of women and children, reinforcing the family so as to preserve the capitalist system itself. They equally underestimated the obstacles to be overcome — beyond the economic and social revolution — in order to change gender ideology and gender identities within the oppressed class. Insight on this score has been the contribution of the feminist movement.

However, the bureaucracies of the Eastern bloc have never been encumbered with these sorts of considerations. Indeed, the policies followed over the last twenty years represent a definitive step backward from the

policies they had themselves originally developed in the realm of paid work for women.

After all the enthusiasm that prevailed just after World War II, all the sonnets to the liberation of women and the omnipresent posters with women driving tractors and brandishing guns, how can this retreat be explained?

The explanation unquestionably lies in the changes these regimes have undergone. Although Stalinist at the outset, they still represented a radical break with the class system and ideology of the bourgeoisie in power before the war. After abandoning any notion of basing themselves on the will of the masses, for the last forty years they have been progressively mired in a process of bureaucratization, crystallization of a privileged layer, not to speak of a fossilization that defies imagination. (Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania is a case in point.)

Despite differences in policies and implementation, none have any doubt that the family constitutes a key element in the stability of their system.

There are several reasons for this. Some are economic. These self-styled "socialist" societies are characterized by a permanent inability to provide the social infrastructure necessary to collectivize the reproduction

of the workforce — to establish alternatives to the privatized nuclear family as a means for nurturing adults and children, caring for the ill and so on.

However many speeches are given on needed reforms, the priorities always ended up slanted towards heavy industry. This is true even in East Germany, where independent women's pacifist groups have continuously demanded that subsidies given to the army be given instead to collective social services.

Above all, the bureaucracy has a stake in the family for political reasons. The family makes it possible to channel individual aspirations into a private framework. The model of emotional and social relationships put forward in Eastern Europe is no better than in Western Europe.

Paternalism permeates every pore

This exclusive orientation toward meeting basic human needs in private life has its origins in the profoundly conservative character of the bureaucracy, which must prevent all collective expression and organization around social needs in order to preserve the power it has usurped.

Any sharing of ideas threatens the basis of its domination. But that's exactly where a genuine policy of collective provision of life necessities would inevitably lead.

The paternalism that permeates every pore of these societies is acutely evident around the question of women's control over reproduction. All of these regimes have attempted to make motherhood compulsory for women. Contraceptives are not easily available and of very poor quality. Abortion is difficult to obtain.

Romania is a case by itself. Since 1966 women do not have the right to abortion unless pregnancy poses a serious threat to their health or if they already have five children. In addition, since 1984 they have been forced to submit to surprise gynaecological examinations (especially in the factories where women are a majority of the workforce), in order to detect possible pregnancies and force women to give birth under the pain of legal penalty.

In this country, where the pill and other contraception is banned, one doctor was sentenced to 10 years in prison for having tried to save the life of a woman who was dying from a self-induced abortion. And yet Romanian women still reject having children. For can we really ask infants to take the oath that is floating

Representations of women and the reality of their lives are very different (DR)



around as an underground joke in Romania: "I, the baby, place my hand on my navel and swear that I can grow up without needing anything to eat or using up any heat?" (7)

In other countries attempts to abolish legal abortion have met with very consistent resistance from women. The Soviet Union was forced to re-legalize abortion in 1955 because the law was impossible to enforce — abortions were widely available thanks to women doctors and midwives. Still, while women have been able to protect their right to abortion in principle, in practice things are more difficult.

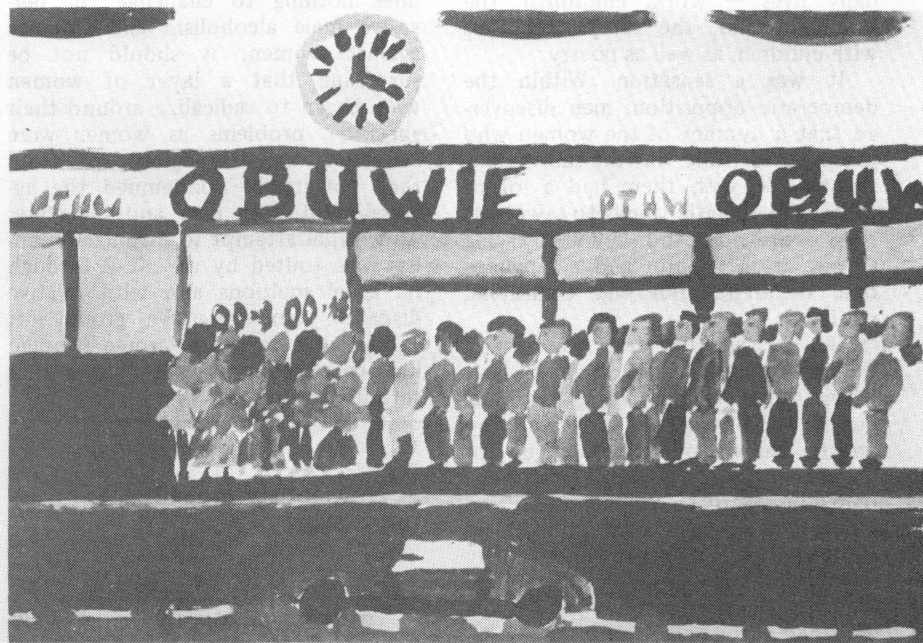
While abortion is legal in the first three months of pregnancy in the other East European countries, it is subject to a variety of restrictions. In some countries, the decision is in the hands of a commission of "experts." This is the case in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. And it is sometimes surrounded by humiliating procedures, as in the Soviet Union.

While notions about the "right to life of the fetus" are not circulating in Eastern Europe, other arguments are put forward to try to discourage women from having abortions, such as possible physical after-effects or the risk of sterility. While no abortion is totally harmless, particularly on the psychological level, experience has shown that if done early enough and under proper conditions there is minimal risk.

A woman from Arkhangelsk described the conditions awaiting those in her city who plough ahead after going before the "socio-legal bureau" charged with examining such cases:

When they arrive at what is called "the meat grinder," the women "line up outside the operating room. Two to six women are operated on at a time in the same room. Things are arranged in such a way that each woman can see what's going on across from her. The face distorted by suffering, the bloody mess pulled out of the woman's insides . . . Without anesthesia, the woman is in terrible pain . . . The next day she's sent home without any regard for the state she's in, which leaves a lot to be desired." (8)

For countries that pride themselves on the quality of their preventive medical care, this state of affairs is rather extraordinary. Without access to contraceptives and without social support for using them, women have been forced to rely primarily on abortion as a form of birth control. The regimes would have denied them even that had they been able to do so. Grudgingly allowing abortion, state policy seems to be aimed deliberately at penalizing women for trying to limit



A painting by a Polish child of queues at a shoe shop (DR)

their childbearing.

The moralism and prudery imposed by the dominant ideology reaches a fever pitch around anything having to do with sexuality. Witness the banning of homosexuality in the Soviet Union and Romania, where this "crime" is punishable by up to five years in prison.

In the other countries, the law is less severe, but hysteria regularly seizes the media on this subject, as seen recently in the debates around AIDS — whether homosexuality, a disease of bourgeois decadence, could actually exist in a socialist country, whether AIDS cases had or had not been discovered, and so on.

All this hypocrisy inevitably creates a flourishing black market for pornography, like the one in Hungary. Striptease shows and prostitutes are winked at in the big hotels, the prostitutes being more or less on the state payroll and often serving as informants, as in Poland.

To wish its readers a merry Christmas in 1981, the official journal of the Communist Party of Hungary printed pictures of nude women, chorus lines, etc. on the cover of all its editions, accompanied by a few gag lines to inspire holiday cheer.

This moralism has as its corollary the phenomenon of violence within the family. Cases of battered women are particularly numerous (also rapes, which are rarely talked about). These statistics rise in tandem with the rate of alcoholism. This is true in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.

"In East Germany violence against women remains a mass social phenomenon," affirm East German opposi-

tionists. (9) The divorce rate is extremely high in all these countries. In two-thirds to three-quarters of the cases, it is the woman who files for divorce, very often for reasons linked to violence or alcoholism.

Nevertheless, though the family is an instrument in the hands of the bureaucracy and a battleground that is sometimes tragic, it also represents a domain that partially evades bureaucratic control. It is a relatively independent cell where people can express themselves freely and find at least a minimum of emotional relations, a haven that enables resistance to social relations marked by authoritarianism and interdictions of every sort. It is perceived as a refuge by the majority of people, particularly by women.

This is perfectly understandable, given the hyper-repressive nature of these societies. And we must grasp how this helps shape the way women in Eastern Europe have begun to raise their voices about their problems.

The first women to get together publicly in Eastern Europe toward the end of the 1970s were the women in Leningrad who published the *Women in Russia* almanac in samizdat [self-publishing] form. This initiative was immediately very popular; the almanac was reproduced in the West in 1980.

"The first socially-offensive journal," claimed one of its co-editors. The journal compiled an assortment of

7. 'Alternative,' *New series*, No. 1, April 1986.

8. "Women in Russia," 22.

9. "Gegenstimmen," No. 4, 1981.

testimony by women about their daily lives — work, childbirth, the family, prison, the camps, relations with children, as well as poetry.

It was a sensation. Within the democratic opposition, men discovered that a number of the women who participated fully in the movement side-by-side with them had a lot of other very specific things to say about their oppression. And they were trying to say it in a form and a language that differed from the traditional samizdat.

But this almanac also “impressed” the government, which caught on fast. After a few issues, search warrants began to be issued, followed by arrests, threats of imprisonment for several years, denial of mothers’ rights in regard to their children and induced exile; in a word, the blackmail and violence that is the daily lot of those men and women who dare only to claim the democratic rights inscribed in the constitution.

The repressive forces could not afford to ignore these women who, simply by describing the conditions of their lives, directly denounced a government that brooks no opposition. What these women did had a decidedly political dimension, whether or not that had been their objective.

The almanac women were far from having a common orientation. Some, like the agnostic Tatiana Mamonova, though not considering themselves Leninist, did not reject the Leninist tradition. Others, profoundly anti-Marxist and religious, went on to form the “Club Marie” [a reference to the Virgin] after the wave of repression that hit the initiators of the almanac in 1980. It soon became apparent that this group had more supporters. Its members put forward a religious analysis of women’s liberation, manifesting a reliance on spiritual, religious and humanist values that came as a surprise to Western feminists.

But this phenomenon of religiosity must be understood in light of the revival enjoyed by all branches of Eastern European religions since the end of the 1970s — the Russian Orthodox Church, in Hungary, not to mention Poland.

This revival represents a search for alternative solutions on the part of some oppositional currents which are permeated with profound pessimism and have lost sight of any perspective other than escape into mystical values. In addition, in many cases (Poland, East Germany, Russia) the Church has actively supported the opposition and provided crucial organizational infrastructure.

In face of the corruption and hypocrisy of a bureaucracy which

talks about the sacred family, but does nothing to challenge the pervasive male alcoholism and violence against women, it should not be surprising that a layer of women who began to radicalize around their specific problems as women were attracted to a religious pacifism that powerfully condemned the aggression of both men and the state. This initial attempt to organize feminists was routed by the KGB through its usual methods and with relative dispatch. However, the group left behind the fact that some women had dared to break the taboos that shroud private life.

A consciously radical approach

The women students who built a feminist group at a University of Warsaw in the fall of 1980 understood the role of the almanac women and were delighted by the support they received from some of them who had been driven into exile. From the outset, these Polish women took a consciously radical approach. They fully identified with the feminist movement in Western Europe.

As activists in the independent union of students created during the heyday of Solidarnosc, they understood that it was equally important to raise their specific demands and expressed their aspirations in a program of twelve central points on the oppression of women.

Though we in the West all rejoiced at the birth of this new group, it must be said that their influence remained extremely limited, never reaching the women activists in the ranks of Solidarnosc, although they tried. And yet these working-class women were an essential component of the fantastic mass movement that gripped Poland for eighteen months.

Women in Solidarnosc were in the forefront on more than one occasion. One instance was the “hunger march” in Lodz and other cities in the summer of 1981, demonstrations protesting the government policy of trying to starve out the population in order to subvert the movement. Another was the strike of women workers in Zyrardow near Warsaw in the fall of that same year, one of the first actions to take up the idea of the “active strike,” where workers stayed on the job but turned the fruits of production over to the social movement instead of the state.

But the vast majority of these women activists never reached the point of posing their own problems

as women. Only 6% of the delegates to the first national convention of the independent trade union were women. On a local level, too, women were not at all given their due in the leadership structures of Solidarnosc.

Protesting against this state of affairs, while at the same time continuing to assume the burdens of their dual role, women were torn between the factory, the union and the home. In addition, the weight of the Catholic Church in Poland and the influence of its reactionary ideas on the role of women and the family prevented these women activists from embracing some of the truths enunciated by the student group in Warsaw.

For East European women, the road to consciousness about their oppression as women is strewn with traps. But “Women for Peace” in East Germany, in fighting against military service for women, demonstrated that an approach beginning totally within the framework of the general independent pacifist movement in that country could lead to questioning the specific oppression of women.

These women certainly do not consider themselves feminists. “Why make liberation a strictly female theme? Doesn’t everyone in East Germany seek liberation?” said Barbel Bohle, one of the animators of the group who has spent time in prison for her activities. But later she adds: “Many women come to us because they want to discuss problems they confront as women.” (10)

Significantly, various chapters of “Women for Peace,” while remaining fully a part of the general movement, ended up deciding to meet in women-only meetings, in order to stop men from monopolizing all the speaking and to allow unfettered discussion of what was on their minds.

“Many things indicate that a lot of women in our country are dissatisfied,” writes Christa Wolf, a well-known East German novelist, in the preface to Maxie Wander’s book, *Guten Morgen, du Schone*.

“Women are no longer asking what they are, but who they are Our society has given women the possibility to do what men do. Predictably, this leads women to ask themselves, but what exactly is it that men do? Is this what I really want?”

[This article was originally published in the US journal, *Against the Current*, No. 6, Nov-Dec 1986, but has been slightly revised and updated.] □

10. ‘Cahiers du Feminisme,’ No. 27, Winter 1984.

Hard times for women workers

1986 WITNESSED the introduction of so-called equal opportunity for women in Japan. The law that came into force on April 1 stipulates that employers can no longer recruit male workers only.

The equal employment bill was presented as part of the preparations for domestic laws to qualify Japan for ratification of the United Nations' (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the Convention), which Japan signed in 1979.

The real significance of the bill, however, was more than the development of women's power and feminism; the legislation reflected the total transformation of labor policy being undertaken by the Japanese government and a concomitant new phase on the labor front.

KAJI ETSUKO

Interestingly enough, last year, 1985, when the Equal Opportunity for Men and Women in Employment Bill passed the National Diet [parliament], the total number of women employed as either full-time or part-time workers in Japan surpassed that of full-time housewives. More than 15 million women are working in Japan today, accounting for 36.5% of the total labor force. Women are no longer a "reserve labor force," whom employers "hire last and fire first." (1)

In a sense, the law was a necessary move for Japanese capitalism to deal with this newly emerged labor force. "Career woman" has become a favorite caption in women's journals and even women business executives are not so much of a rarity today. At the same time, the law is the outcome of government policy towards women over the last two decades.

The Labor Dispatch Law that came into force as of July 1, 1986, is another measure by the government to control women's participation in the labor market.

This series of recent legislation will inevitably affect the pillar of Japanese capitalism: the life-long employment and seniority systems, largely for male workers who are supposed to support their families. The legislation also reflects recent trends in administrative reform, industrial rationalization and reorgani-

zation, including the privatization of state-owned industries, and an apparent weakening of the labor movement as a whole.

In the process of drawing up legislation on equal employment, "protection of motherhood" was one issue taken up. The provisions contained in the Labor Standards Law to protect female workers (restrictions on overtime and dangerous work, prohibition of late night work, guarantee of maternity leave, and the like) aroused strong controversy. Women were told they should choose "either protection or equality."

The Group for Making Our Own Equal Employment Law (*Tsukuru-Kai*), organized in 1979, demanded legislation in line with the UN Convention. The Convention made clear that "Special measures aiming at protecting motherhood shall not be regarded as discrimination," and the protection of motherhood was to be reviewed in terms of the rights of both the sexes. Many women in the labor movement also organized themselves to protest against the view that the protective provisions are "overprotective" and contradict the concept of "equality".

In April 1983, when they learned of the government's draft outline for the bill, they realized that it would not have a beneficial effect on women, since the "protection of motherhood" would be largely deleted. They

claimed that if protection for female workers was denied, women would be forced to work just as hard as male workers. What they demanded was "equality as a result" rather than "equal opportunity": positive conditions should be created so that women could fully exercise their right to work.

Consequently, some women's groups began to stand up and say that they did not want an equal opportunity law at all. The movement reflected a basic, universal controversy over protection and equality in women's work.

Women in Japan learned that the debate has been taken up on a global scale during the UN's decade for Women and deepened and extended from mere equal opportunity for both women and men (formal equality) to resultant equality (substantial equality). (2) They also realized that in Japan particularly the debate was effectively a cooperative effort by government and capitalists with the intention to "divide and rule" women workers as efficiently as possible.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of women workers in Japan over the past two decades. The total number of employed women as of 1984 was 15.18 million, or 35.6% of the total labor force, up from 7.38m, or 3.31% in 1960. This increase was more rapid after the oil crisis in 1973. The growth rate registered 3% from 1977-80 and 2.9% between 1980-84, while male employed workers increased only about 1% during the same period.

It is expected that the increase in women workers will continue for some time and more women will be incorporated into the labor market. This means that the role of women workers will become more and more important in Japanese industry, the labor issue and in society as a whole.

Another significant point is that the new women workers are largely middle-aged, married women. There has been a marked increase in housewives taking up mostly part-time work in the labor market since around 1976. Now one in three married women go out to work. They began to be mobilized during the high economic growth period as a reserve labor force, when capitalists tried to find a supplement for the young, unmarried female workers, the traditional major force of working women in Japan. But the number of older

1. See "Women denounce fake Equal Employment Opportunity Law" in 'International Viewpoint' No. 70, February 25, 1985.

2. On the United Nations Decade for Women, see Ros Young's article "Nairobi: Women debate their liberation", in 'IV' No. 82, September 16, 1985.



Fulltime women workers earn only 40% of their male counterparts

women entering the market increased so rapidly that those working housewives became a major, rather than supplementary, work force. Women workers aged 15-24, who used to account for more than 50% up until 1960 and 41.5% in 1970, had decreased to 20.5% by 1984, while women over 35 years old now account for 60% of the total women's labor force.

Needless to say, older women had been playing a major role in agriculture before. But it is the first time in Japan that middle-aged, married women have come to constitute a majority of women employees. Thus both the quantity and quality of women workers has changed rapidly over the past few years.

The decrease in the ratio of young women employed reflects the trend of an increasing number of women going into higher education. Women's work in Japan is characterized by the "M" shaped curve. Many young, unmarried women go to work after high school, or higher education, temporarily quit to get married or rear children, then go out again to get a job. The second curve is gradually getting higher.

Where do they work? As of 1980, the industries where the larger part of employed women were working were: 1. service industry - 4.02m, 30.2% of women workers; 2. manufacturing - 3.97m., 28.5%; and 3. wholesale and retail sales - 3.6m, 25.9%. More than 80% of working

women are concentrated in these three industries, reflecting the "softening of the economy" and development of the "service-oriented economy" centering around the information industry.

The number of women workers in the tertiary sector, in particular, increased by 7% between 1970 and 1980, while those in the second sector (manufacturing) decreased by 6.8%. Nearly half of the employees in such service industries as finance, insurance, information, real estate, wholesaling and retailing are women. Women tend to concentrate not only in certain industries but also in certain categories of jobs. Low wages in those job categories have often been justified because this is "women's work."

As women play a larger role in these industries, discrimination against women in employment is not necessarily eliminated. Rather, the emergence of women workers is based on discrimination, much stronger in Japan than in other industrialized countries.

Women are discriminated against at all levels of employment ranging from recruitment to retirement. For example, almost half of the companies which recruit both men and women offer "different hiring conditions for each sex" including high-school, junior college and university graduates. And 63% of companies "excluded women from certain jobs."

The wage gap between women and men is actually widening. According to a report produced in January 1983, the wage gap in the manufacturing sector in Japan was the widest among 14 major industrialized countries in 1982. The average wage of women accounted for only 43.1% that of men. (In all industries except agriculture, South Korea showed the biggest wage gap between men and women.)

Women get half men's pay

The government figures show that in all industries in 1960, women were paid 42.8% the wage of men. By 1976, that percentage increased to 56.1%, but then began to fall every year, from 55% in 1979 to only 51.8% in 1984. The average monthly income of an employed woman in 1984 was around 140,000 yen [at that time, about 5,800 US dollars] including bonus, according to Labor Ministry statistics. At the same time, prices are skyrocketing to off-set any wage increase. Almost 20% of family income pays for housing loans and education in an average working family. This is one reason why housewives go out

to work - to get supplementary income.

Secondly, the types of employment for women have become increasingly diversified and now include part-time, temporary, daily and stay-at-home employees and housewives doing piecework at home. Almost half of the increase in women workers (41%) are either part-time or temporary/daily-paid workers. More than 70% of the total number of part-time workers, temporary, daily and stay-at-home workers are women.

It should be noted that the title "part-time" workers does not necessarily imply working shorter hours than regular workers. According to a government survey, more than 70% of "part-time" workers work 6 to 8 hours a day, doing essentially the same work as regular employees. "part-time" designates a status of workers who are paid less and who usually have no fringe benefits, bonus or job security.

Thirdly, more than half of women workers are concentrated in medium- and small-sized companies (with less than 100 employees), which in most cases are not organized. Large companies with more than 500 employees with a higher ratio of organized workers employ predominantly male workers. It is this kind of employment structure that contributes to the widening wage-gap between women and men. If we set the wage of male full-time workers at 100, a female full-time worker's wage is around 60, a female part-time worker's wage around 40, and women working at home about 20. Thus, it is obvious that women workers constitute the low-wage stratum in this society. Aside from this, women are also discriminated against in terms of social welfare, fringe benefits, allowances for housing and dependents and so on.

So the nature of women's work in Japan has entered a completely new phase in the 1980s. Up until the early '70s, the basic issue was that opportunities for women to work were quite limited and the majority of women workers were young, unmarried women. Forced retirement of female employees before 30 years old or when they got married, became pregnant or gave birth, was rampant. Hiring young women at minimal wages had been one of the major policies of Japanese enterprises.

As the high-economic growth period proceeded, the shortage of young workers became serious. The number of women who received higher education also increased. Japanese capitalists needed another labor force to exploit, and middle-aged housewives locally plus young, unskilled workers in developing countries provi-

ded the fodder. Labor-intensive industries such as the textile, electronics, garment and other manufacturing, and food-processing industries began off-shore production to secure young women workers in other Asian countries.

The 1973 oil crisis marked a turning point. As Japanese capitalism felt it necessary to rationalize and reorganize industry to maintain the economic growth and retain economic power in the region, women were a vital tool. They had always been the "control valve" of the economy. But, unlike the end of World War II, women were not excluded from the labor market this time, though their number in the manufacturing sector decreased by 0.5% during 1970 and 1975, in the immediate aftermath of the oil shock. This had a strong impact on the women's liberation movement and on the global trend of feminism, to be highlighted in the UN International Women's Year in 1975.

Women themselves, demanding more participation in social life and economic activities strongly denounced sexual discrimination and the division of labor based on sex. Other social factors such as the spread of electric home appliances, higher education, mass culture and commercialism and automation facilitated women's participation in social life.

Japanese capitalism responded to the trend in a unique way, with policies encouraging the "efficient utilization of women's power" and the UN International Women's Year in 1975 was a golden opportunity to take advantage of.

Prior to the government's bill for women workers, the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce presented a "View on the Labor Standards Law" to the Ministry of Labor in 1970, in which they claimed that indirect protection of motherhood, i.e. protective regulations for women in the law, were "over-protective" measures which obstructed women's participation in social activities. They demanded that application of the Labor Standards Law for part-time workers should be regulated and recommended the introduction of flexible working hours. Basically they demanded revision of the law so that enterprises could hire and exploit as many married women as part-time workers as possible.

Since then, "protection" for minors and women workers has taken on a negative meaning, something women had to forfeit if they wanted to be treated equally with men.

Ariizumi Tohru, chair of the Subcommittee on Women of the Study Group on the Labor Standards Law, a consultative body for the

Labor Ministry set up in 1969, stated, "it is needless to say that women are weaker physically than men . . . and inferior as workers in industrial fields where physical strength is required Women workers in general, whether they are still young or adults over 18 years old are dependent as family members They are less organized than male workers, therefore it is necessary to regulate their work with protective laws."

Cheap labour

At the same time, Ariizumi stressed that protection is obstructive in employment. "From an employer's point of view women workers are welcomed only as cheap labor in the industrial areas where automation and mechanization have made each worker's job much simpler. In certain industries such as textiles and light electronics, workshops suitable for women are sufficiently developed to accept married women workers who are much less trained or skilled. Aside from their lack of skills, women have physical handicaps like menstruation, delivery and child care, as well as the legal handicaps prescribed in the Labor Standards Law. Basically, however, we should admit that women's labor is cheap enough to offset these obstacles."

Where can we find a women who is willing to agree that menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, child care — in short reproduction of the next generation — are "physical handicaps"? Why must women accept this assessment that such "obstacles" can only be offset by cheap wages for their labor?

In a report presented by the Labor Committee of the Economic Council in 1972, it was also stated that one urgent task was to locate women part-time workers as an integral part of the total labor force and to expand the area to make the best use of them. In the same year, the Working Women's Welfare Law was set up, in order to attract more housewives into the labor market as part-time workers by encouraging them to utilize their "free time" or "leisure time". The basic idea was that women should place top priority in the home, any job being secondary.

Later, this particular law was revised to form two different legislations: the Childcare Leave Law in 1975 and the Equal Opportunity Law in 1985. The former is mainly for public school teachers, and nurses. Notably, the controversy over the Equal Opportunity Law derives from

the basic notion of women's work and reproductive rights.

In 1977, the government publicized its action program for the UN Decade for Women, in which the abolition of protective regulation for women workers was brought up on the grounds that protective measures would reinforce discrimination against women in the workplace. This position regarded protection as a form of discrimination and considered it to be conceptually opposed to equality.

The group's report, "The Task and Direction of Labor Laws for Women" was submitted to the Labor Minister in November 1978. It presented three issues: 1. legislation for equality, from the hiring stage to dismissal at all levels so that equality of both sexes could be realized; 2. that direct protection of maternity should be reinforced; and 3. most of the other protective rules for women could be eliminated to enable women to be treated equally with men.

With this, the groundwork for legislation was completed. Of the three themes adopted by the UN Decade for Women — "Equality, Peace and Development" — "equality" offered a convenient means for the Japanese government and capitalists to initiate an "equal employment law". In July 1979, the government signed the Convention at the World Conference, which was adopted at the UN General Assembly in December 1979 and ratified by 39 countries by March, 1982.

With the road towards the equal employment law in Japan paved, business organizations and top executives of big enterprises, one after another, began to express their deep concern over the bill. They would either denounce protection as a form of reverse discrimination or stress repeatedly that "a woman's place is in the home."

The Kansai Businessmen's Council (*Kansai Keieisha Kyogikai*) submitted their views on the revision of the Labor Standards Law in March, 1982:

"Prohibition of sexual discrimination should include both discriminatory and favorable treatment of women, i.e. protective regulations, aside from maternity protection Employers will inevitably have to deal with equality between men and women in terms of hiring, posting, training and education, wages, promotion and the like. Basically, it should be noted that equality means 'equal opportunity' and if we should agree with 'resultant equality' it would cause adverse effects and more difficulties . . ."

And in July, the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce pronounced that "Legislation with regards to equal employ-

ment for men and women must be carried out deliberately lest it should lead to discouragement of corporate activities." The statement also stressed that "protective rules for women" should be carefully reviewed first, and that legislation should not aim for "resultant equality but equal opportunity."

When the outline of the bill was drafted by members of the Women's and Youth Problems Council, top executives of major business groups in the advisory panel to the Labor Minister, that assumed responsibility for drafting the bill, expressed blatant opposition to the actual bill itself. The powerful Keidanren threw all its weight against labor's attempt to create a "law with teeth," and to crush the growing women's movement demanding a genuine equal employment law.

Business leaders did not hesitate to admit that they were against equal employment opportunity from the outset. Every time a bill was drafted at any sub-committee of the Council, they strongly criticized it. Otsuki Bunnei the chairman of Nikkeiren (the Japan Federation of Employers' Associations) even stated at a press conference that Japan should not have ratified the Convention. "It is only a short while ago that women in Japan began to participate in society," he said. "There is no need to rush into such legislation; it is a more urgent task to reinforce family ties to prevent young people from getting violent. . . . Before making a law, we have to evaluate how much Japanese housewives have contributed to the industrial development in Japan."

These views run in beautiful harmony with the policy to fully utilize women's power in the labor market.

The basic ideology is to present women as the "weaker sex" and "inferior" to males as workers.

In February, 1984, the Council submitted a final draft plan to the Labor Minister to be accepted by a Cabinet Conference. The Labor Minister, Yamaguchi Toshio, remarked: "Among the industrialized countries, Japan is the only country that still has menstruation leave. Today, physical strength is not as important for working as in the past. This is the era of women. Women can develop their capabilities and use their resources fully as much as they want in this society. If they demand protection to compensate for their physical handicaps as a basic right, women's capabilities will be adversely affected. . . . Lest this should happen, I hope the bill will be passed in the Diet as early as possible . . ."

Equality legislation merely a guideline

The bill was passed, surrounded by quite a number of women protesters, and thus the Equal Employment Opportunity Law and the revision of the Labor Standards Law were established.

Now that the law has come into force, how much "equal opportunity" is to be offered to a woman looking for a good job? One of the strong criticisms lodged against the law from women is the fact that compared with similar laws in other countries, mostly enacted during the '70s, the Japanese law is less effective, since it does not include penalties or ban discrimination at all levels

of employment. The law is merely a guideline, urging employers to "do their best" to offer equal opportunity for both sexes. In other words, the law itself is based upon the assumption that there are still full-time housewives. Even if the chance for employment is opened equally to both women and men, if this means a 40-hour working week the majority of women are forced to drop out.

In addition, restrictions on night work and overtime work for women have been greatly relaxed. This kind of "equal opportunity," therefore, becomes a means for indirect discrimination. In this sense, the law might have emerged as a means to put the brakes on further changes in the rapidly crumbling system of the division of labor, and moderate and control the transformation of the labor force.

One phenomenon that has emerged in the first year of the equal opportunity law has been introduction of a so-called "ramified career system." The law prohibits employers from recruiting only male graduate students. Even so, some companies have no intention of hiring female graduates; many have changed their policy to offer two different career tracks for women: a general and an auxiliary track. If a woman is hired on the former, she is supposed to be treated equally with male workers, including job transfer, overtime work and so on. The names of the courses differ from company to company: integrated and general tracks, professional and clerical tracks and so on. Hiring based on job division is not prohibited. Many banks, securities and finance companies, and manufacturers have already adopted this kind of

Women in Japan demonstrate for their right to work (DR)



personnel administration. The wage gap between men and women is justified in these terms.

According to the Economic Planning Agency's recent report, "Labor Market in the year 2000," one out of three workers will be irregulars — part-time, dispatched, or temporary — by the year 2000. At present, one in six is an irregular worker.

It is easy to predict that women will account for the larger part of these irregular workers. At the same time, young women will be increasingly employed as dispatched workers. These outside workers are, of course, excluded from the existing trade-union movement. Even today, 99.4% of dispatched workers for clerical jobs are women, engaging in making photocopies, filing, typing, and such work as telephone operating, computer programming, systems engineering and the like.

The Women's Council of the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, Osaka Chapter, opened a telephone counselling service in May this year in an attempt to find out the actual impact of the new legislation on the conditions of working women.

Over three days, for example, between May 29 and 31, the counselling service, dubbed "Hello, Equal Opportunity Law!" received 32 calls. Most of the complaints involved forced retirement, long working hours or discriminatory wages. In several cases, companies set their retirement age at 45 for women and 55 for men, apparently violating the Equal Opportunity Law.

In one company a woman who continues to work beyond 35 years old is forced to sign a contract saying that she will voluntarily retire within five years. One new female recruit hired by a city bank asked her boss if there was a possibility that she would be transferred, to which the boss replied, "Women have nothing to do with transference because they are going to quit in two or three years anyway."

Another woman with a 15-year career in a city bank was faced with the choice of doing an integrated course or a general course, right after the law was enforced. Although she chose to take the integrated course, the road to some form of career, the management turned her down saying, "Women cannot work as hard as men. And male employees would be discouraged if they had to compete with women." She was compelled to take the secondary course. "I could have been promoted if there were no such law at all," she remarked.

As for working hours, the law has meant that: 1. overtime is extended to 3 hours for both women and men (before it was one hour for

women); 2. at a food-processing company, working hours have been arbitrarily changed from 9-5 to 8-5.30 and the special leave clause in the company regulations has been deleted; 3. one accountant was forced to quit her job when she was asked to do two or three hours overtime everyday; 4. one bank employee complained that she worked after eight o'clock every day but overtime allowance was only paid for two days a month.

Wage discrimination

Wage discrimination still exists in different forms. Some women said that even though they work from 9 to 5 as full-time workers, they are paid hourly, 750 yen [4.90 US dollars] per hour and are not treated as regular workers. For one assistant nurse working night shift at a national hospital, her employment contract is renewed every year, and payment is hourly without retirement allowance and bonus. She might not get a wage rise for years.

Trade unions are only open to regular workers. Some companies stop wage rises for female employees once they reach a certain age, 30 or 50 years old. Even among skilled workers, who do exactly the same as male workers, only the women are paid daily and have no paid leave. At a big supermarket chain, male workers always come first when it comes to bonuses or being promoted, on the grounds that "they have to support a family."

These reports indicate two things: 1. even the existing Labour Standards Law and other regulations on the labor-management relationship are frequently violated; at the same time trade unions are not responsive to the situation of women workers in insecure positions; 2. the enforcement of the "Equal Opportunity Law" is far from enhancing the conditions for women to work. It is even a backward step in that the law could reinforce discrimination against women with no job security.

Until women's right to work is established as a basic human right, either direct or indirect discrimination against women will remain, and job segregation will deepen as capitalism in the '80s pursues a more rationalized system of employment for both women and men. Labor management and the promotion of women are popular issues debated in economic journals. One the other hand, organized women workers remain at less than 20%.

Today, organizing part-time, dispatched and other temporary workers is the most urgent task facing the labor movement. And yet, the leadership in the existing trade unions does not regard women workers as co-workers, or recognize them as the key to the revival of the labor movement.

Recently, a group of Japanese women workers visited the Philippines in an exchange program with women workers there. They were greatly encouraged by KMK, a women's trade-union center. Although there is already a strong, militant and nationalist trade union, the KMU [May 1 Movement] in the Philippines, women felt they needed their own union which could deal with the labor issues from a woman's perspective.

It may be true in Japan, too, as present labor leaders are so slow to learn when it comes to women. There are many women here who have fully realized the importance of organizing women workers. Some work has already started, as we see in the recent struggles of part-time workers in different parts of the country. The number of part-time workers' unions is gradually increasing.

Regrettably, Japanese women failed to block the "Equal Opportunity Law." We are now faced with a deepening of the divisions between women and men, and among women themselves, in the name of "securing labor-management relations," Japanese-style. Moreover, we are faced with rapid micro-electronization, the introduction of office automation as well as insecure employment in various forms, and denials of the right to organize and establish solidarity as workers. Segregation by Japanese capitalism on an international level is also an integral part of this pattern.

The whole picture is clear enough. The majority of working women are more exploited, divided and discriminated against, either in Japan or in other countries where Japanese monopoly capital is being consolidated. Meanwhile, a small number of elite women are thrown into the most severe competition along with their fellow male workers.

The first year of equal opportunity must be transformed into a year for the launching of a new women workers' movement that can build up solidarity with women workers in other countries. If working women in Japan identify themselves with Third World peoples within and outside of Japan, they could make a leap forward — not towards equality, but liberation. □

[This article was first published in the Japanese review, *Ampo*, Vol. 18, Nos 2-3, 1986]

AROUND THE WORLD



Canada

Counter-summit

WHEN United States President Ronald Reagan and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney meet in Ottawa on Sunday, April 5 they will be confronted by thousands of angry people protesting against the brutal US-backed war in Central America.

Joining protesters against the war, and against Canadian government complicity with US militarism, will be opponents of Mulroney's anti-worker trade and social policies, acid rain, federal restrictions on women's choice on abortion, cutbacks in education, and de-regulation/de-nationalization of basic public services.

Very broad Summit Protest Coalitions have been formed already in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal to organize and transport thousands to the march and rally at Parliament Hill.

The Toronto Coalition was initiated by the Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition, Tools for Peace and Canadian Action for Nicaragua. It quickly attracted a wide array of anti-militarist, disarmament, solidarity, church, environmental, students' and women's rights groups.

Because the Washington Contra-gate scandal continues to attract world attention, opposition to the war in Central America should be the dominant theme of the Summit Protest.

Millions of people around the world have been witness to the public exposure of systematic lying, cheating and murder, all in violation of US law, that is at the heart of US foreign policy. Canadians and Quebecois will have the unique opportunity to make their feelings known directly to the chief world imperialist, Reagan, and his silent partner-in-crime, Mulroney.

Demonstrations in Ottawa will also want to distinguish our outrage over secret, illegal US funding of the mercenary contras attacking Nicaragua, from the hypocritical protests of right wing US politicians upset about the delivery of arms to Iran.

On the same weekend a Counter-Summit will be held in Ottawa. Unfortunately, this event, sponsored by the ultra-nationalist Council of Canadians with some support

from the leadership of the Canadian Labour Congress - will advocate protectionism and take the side of Canadian business interests in the current round of inter-imperialist rivalry between Canada and the US that will be a feature of the leaders' talks.

April 5 will be the first in a series of Central America anti-intervention protests this Spring. On April 25 major mass demonstrations will occur in Washington DC and San Francisco, California. Some Canadians will travel to take part in these actions. Others will distribute anti-intervention literature at disarmament demonstrations in Vancouver, Toronto and elsewhere in Canada that day.

And in numerous cities across the country on June 6 there will be demonstrations focusing on opposition to the war in Central America, and demanding that the Canadian government condemn US intervention, increase aid and trade to Nicaragua and suspend aid to the bloody US-backed dictatorships in the region.

The broadest possible unity in action of solidarity, anti-nuclear and labour movement forces leading up to the Ottawa Summit Protest can prove the way towards a much more effective anti-war movement across English Canada and Quebec. All out for Ottawa on April 5! □

New Caledonia

Anti-Kanak offensive

THE CHIRAC government has been taking a harder and harder line against the Kanak independence movement in New Caledonia. The crackdown started with the beefing up of the French garrison (8,000 soldiers, one for every eight Kanaks). Then there was the Pons Law, which legitimized this militarization, repealed all land-holding reforms benefiting the Kanaks, and cut off credits to regional councils favoring independence.

This offensive has gone into a new stage with the announcement that this summer a referendum is to be held on a basis totally satisfactory to the colonialist right.

Anyone who has been in the territory for more than three years will have the right to vote, and the choice is between "autonomy with France" or "independence against France."

This amounts to endorsing the

European immigration over the last 30 years that has put the Kanak people in a minority in their own land.

Bernard Pons, French minister for the overseas territories, recently visited New Caledonia. He refused to meet with the independence movement leaders. He met only with a few traditional chiefs and some pro-French Melanesian villagers, in a mockery of the aspirations of an entire people.

The minister went so far as to attribute the fight for independence to ideological manipulation by "French leftists." Speaking to a handful of pro-French Kanaks, he said "go and preach the good word to your brothers and sisters who have been deluded, and explain to them that they have been whipped up by Europeans belonging to the Revolutionary Communist League [French section of the Fourth International], who have come to New Caledonia to advance Marxist thinking and totalitarian ideology." (*Le Monde*, February 10, 1987.)

The Chirac government is speeding up its offensive to head off the diplomatic campaign of the FLNKS [the Kanak nationalist organization], take advantage of the delay in mobilization in recent months and try to cement a consensus of political parties around the form of the referendum. When it was in power, in fact, the Socialist Party considered applying the same criteria for voting.

In its convention in early February at Arama, in the northern part of the island, the FLNKS reaffirmed its position that only the colonized people, the Kanak people, should have the right to vote in a referendum on self-determination. Privately the FLNKS leaders say that they are ready to negotiate on participation by the "victims of history," third generation European Caledonians born in the territory. On this point, Paris is refusing any discussion.

So, unless there is some last minute government concession or retreat by the FLNKS, it seems that the independence forces will boycott the referendum. Whether this boycott is passive or active - as it was in November 1984, but which is more difficult now given the military forces present - a referendum held in these conditions cannot in any way solve the Caledonian question.

The situation is more explosive than ever and anti-colonialists have to remain on the alert.

South Africa

Political prisoners

ACCORDING to the Detainees' Parents Support Committee, a democratic South African organization, last year a total of 28,471 people were detained for political reasons, with 25,000 of these being held because of the state of emergency.

Among this 25,000, around 10,000, or 40% were under the age of 18.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) and its affiliates have been hit hardest by this repression, with 75% of the detainees belonging to it. After this, the unions have been most affected — a specific feature of this state of emergency in comparison with that of 1985, which barely touched the unions. Women represented about 10% of total prisoners.

Two of the detainees died during their imprisonment, and there were 75 legal cases denouncing the use of torture on prisoners.

The Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), a member of the COSATU trade-union federation, stepped up its campaign for the release of its general secretary, Moses Mayekiso. After seven months in prison, the police are still unable to produce a real charge against him. There are other MAWU members in prison: Veli Mjiako, officer on the Johannesburg shop stewards council; Gerald Dan, delegate from the Siemens factory in Pretoria; Isaac Mahlong, delegate from the STC factory in Benoni; and Silvester Siboza, an activist at Ferrometals in Witbank. □

Sri Lanka

Protest at arrests

THE SRI LANKA Research and Information Group in London reported February 7 that on the previous day in Rattapitiya, Sri Lanka, Special Branch police raided the Community Resource Centre Press and arrested Mr T.N. Perera and Mr Wijesundera. The two were detailed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which enables the police to hold them for 18 months without trial and without preferring any charges against them.

According to the London Group, the police gave no reasons for the arrests, but brought with them a leaflet that had been printed at the Community Resource Centre Press

(CRC). The CRC had printed the leaflet on behalf of the Independent University Students Union, in accordance with its policy as a resource centre for community groups.

In the leaflet, the students union denounced the murder of its president, who was kidnapped and murdered in December 1986. It did not even accuse the government or police of implication in the murder. It rather attributed the act to the JVP, which the London group describes as a Sinhala chauvinist group. In fact, the JVP is a proscribed organization, blamed by the government for the anti-Tamil riots of 1983, although none of its leaders have been arrested and it continues to operate more or less openly.

The Sri Lanka Research and Information Group noted "so far the police have failed to arrest anyone for the murder of the student leader. On the other hand, the police have arrested many members of the student union who have been the victims of JVP attacks."

Perera is a prominent citizen of the area. Before the government abolished the local government institutions, he was Village Council member for the district and he is secretary of the Rattapitiya Death Benefit Society, an important community organization. He is also a journalist who has written regularly for the newspaper *Janahanda*, known for campaigning for a peaceful political solution to the ethnic conflict and against human rights violations.

Wijesundera is a printworker who had worked at the Ceylon Mercantile Union Press for more than ten years. He began working for the CRC press only in September 1986.

These arrests occurred in the context of a new government offensive against the Tamils in the northern and eastern provinces. The Sri Lanka Research and Information Group has asked for protests to be sent to the Sri Lankan President, J.R. Jayawardene, at President's House, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka, with a copy to the Officer in Charge Mirthana Police Station, Mirihana, Sri Lanka, and a copy to the Sri Lanka Research and Information, 9, Gray's Inn Buildings, London EC1, England. It also suggests that defenders of civil liberties write to the Resource Centre itself, at 119 University Road, Rattapitiya, Boralesgamuwa, Sri Lanka, expressing their support and solidarity.

The Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union (CMU) has called for a "Day of action in pursuance of the struggle for democratic and human rights and peace and justice in this country" on March 5. On February 7 the union issued an appeal for international support

in exercising its democratic right to protest.

In the appeal, the union secretary, Bala Tampoe, noted: "Under the existing 'State of Emergency' . . . the government is in a position to prevent our proposed strike on March 5 by a new regulation . . ."

"Furthermore, if our members distribute leaflets 'amongst the public' or affix posters 'in any place visible to the public without the permission of the Inspector-General of Police or any police officer authorized in that behalf,' they will be liable to be arrested and detained by the police." Moreover, "the Municipal Commissioner of Colombo . . . can refuse permission to our union for the use of any public park or place in the city of Colombo." Tampoe asked for letters and telegrams supporting the union's right to protest to be sent immediately to the country's president (see address above) or to Hon. R. Premadasa, Prime Minister's Office, Colombo. □

Italy

LCR meets with DP

THE national secretariats of Democrazia Proletaria and the Liga Comunista Rivoluzionaria (Italian section of the Fourth International) met on January 28, and discussed the strategic and programmatic questions confronting the two parties.

Discussing the political analysis of each organization led to an exchange of views on the present situation in Italy and an evaluation of the possibility of joint initiatives.

The two delegations agreed in particular on the need to strengthen the class-struggle component of the trade unions. The main elements of this are support for present workers' struggles, highlighting the experiences of self-organization of the railworkers, teachers and school staff, and solidarity with the Genovese dockers' exemplary resistance to the restructuring of the port. Also emphasized was the urgency of taking a political initiative in support of the proposal of a referendum on nuclear power and against any attempt to block the people giving their say on this.

There was agreement on the needs for channels of communication between the two organizations at the level of the national secretariat and of comrades responsible for different areas of work, as well as for a regular exchange of publications and material in order to improve collaboration on the urgent political questions outlined above. □

A holy war against women's rights

AFTER A DECADE of apparent progress for Irish women - which saw the removal of many minor impediments to equality, and some major ones such as the legalization of contraception - the last four years have witnessed a savage backlash on the part of the Catholic Church and the forces of conservatism in Ireland.

In 1983, a heated and bitter public debate culminated in an amendment to the Irish constitution prohibiting, at any future date, any attempt to introduce legislation which would permit abortion.

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This was not in response to any campaign on the issue. There has been no significant agitation or support for abortion in Ireland, possibly because comparatively easy access to British abortion services has provided an alternative, and prevented the growth of a backstreet abortion industry in Ireland. Rather it was an example of the Catholic Church flexing its muscles and creating bulwarks against future change on an issue it felt confident it could win.

In 1986 we had something of an action replay on the issue of divorce, with the difference that this time there was public demand for the legalization of divorce, and early opinion polls suggested an easy victory for those wishing to change the constitution to permit this. Despite the hopeful beginnings, the results were yet another resounding defeat for Irish women.

In the final days of 1986 a last blow was struck as the High Court decided that two organizations, the Dublin WellWoman Centre and Open Line Counselling - both of whom offered a "non-directive" pregnancy counselling service (presenting all the available options, including that of an abortion in Britain) - were in contradiction to the spirit of the 1983 amendment. An injunction was granted preventing them from offering any advice or information on British abortion services.

This High Court case was brought by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), key organizers of the 1983 amendment campaign, and is now being appealed. More confrontations seem likely in 1987.

The possible consequences of these legalistic manoeuvres are numerous, and pose a fundamental threat to women's rights and to the delicate growth of secularism in Ireland. The major areas targeted appear to be women's health and reproductive rights.

During the 1983 (abortion) amendment campaign, several possibilities were raised as to the deeper motives of those in the "pro-life" camp. It was felt that forms of contraception considered abortifacient by the Catholic Church, such as the IUD, the "morning-after" pill, or the low-dose pill, would be put at risk. The High Court decision on the pregnancy counselling services strengthens the possibility of further action being taken on these areas, as the SPUC crusaders, elated by their success, seek new victories in their holy war.

Another worrying aspect of the reactionary backlash was exhibited in 1985, when a Wexford schoolteacher, Eileen Flynn, who had lost her job teaching in a convent because she became pregnant while living with a married man, subsequently lost a High Court case brought to challenge her sacking. The fact that the

man's marriage was long ended, and no divorce possible, made no difference.

For the full import of this it is necessary to realise that almost all education in Ireland is denominationally controlled, therefore employment for non-Catholics, or non-practising Catholics, could be made nearly impossible, and dismissals on moral grounds increasingly a possibility.

The power base of the Catholic Church in Ireland is predominantly rural, as has been demonstrated by the two constitutional amendment votes. In both of these the vote was approximately two to one against liberalization (but with high abstention rates), with urban areas giving the highest votes for the more liberal view. Dublin city was divided almost half and half on both occasions.

Increasingly, in late 20th century Ireland, this base is a shrinking one. It seems inevitable that the Church and conservative interests will increasingly collide with the perceived needs and demands of Irish women, as Ireland follows general European trends. Although currently able to play upon the insecurities created by the economic recession and its consequences (particularly severe in Ireland), this will not always be the case, as the Church, with penetrating foresight, understands.

Increasingly, the Church is creating a legal and structural basis for its teachings, depending on its organizational control of hospitals, schools and so on, rather than on its decaying hold on the consciousness of the mass of the Irish people. This is not, of course, to underestimate the power it still holds: the recent constitutional amendment controversies were resounding victories for the forces of conservatism.

Feminists face a testing time in the immediate future, and are strictly on the defensive in battles such as the WellWoman court case. The prospect, held out by some, of gradual reform under pressure from the EEC has been shown to be false, as have any hopes entertained in the "socially" liberal, but economically and politically conservative, layers of the Irish bourgeoisie (as represented, for example, by sections of the Fine Gael party).

It remains for those with a more radical perspective on social change to meet the challenge. The progressive alliance which fought the two amendment campaigns provides a basis for future action. It is necessary to build a campaign in defence of secular and women's rights that will offer support for those targeted by Catholic reaction. The stage is set for many more conflicts in the next few years. □

