

# International VIEWPOINT

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*Special International  
women's day dossier*

**WOMEN IN THE  
TWILIGHT OF  
STALINISM**

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Independent women's  
movement formed  
— *Ina Merkel*

**Yugoslavia**  
A women's movement in  
an embattled nation

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Defend the gains  
of the  
revolution!

**PANAMA**  
The  
consequences of  
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invasion

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### CORRECTION

SOME ERRORS failed to be corrected in the article on the February plenum of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The most important was the statement on page 7 that Gorbachev's proposal for a strong presidency was not mentioned in the CPSU's new program. It did in fact appear, although it was not featured, and was expressed in a rather defensive way.

## International VIEWPOINT

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# Defend the Nicaraguan revolution!

## THE UNITED SECRETARIAT of the Fourth International issued the following statement March 5 on the victory of the right in the Nicaraguan elections.

The imperialist aggression against the Nicaraguan people distorted the country's entire economy. It led to the growth of hyperinflation that has had a major impact on the standard of living of the population. The adjustment policy adopted by the Nicaraguan government did reduce the rate of inflation, but at the cost of a greater assault on the living standards of the population. This created very wide discontent, which was channeled into votes for UNO. The Nicaraguan people voted against the war, low wages, poverty and hunger. Unfortunately, the majority of the population thought they were doing this by voting for those who are in fact responsible for this terrible situation.

This trend was aggravated by the fact that the social organizations formed since the revolution have been undermined by the social breakdown. At the same time, another major weakness revealed itself. Undoubtedly, the existence of parliamentary democracy was necessary. But we wonder if it was not also necessary to extend the elements of direct democracy in order to consolidate the revolution. That is, a democracy that would enable the broad masses to decide the essential economic and social policies. The creation of such a structure would be a crucial help not only to win elections but to give impetus to the consolidation of the revolutionary process.

Another element that worked against the FSLN was the vast anti-Communist campaign whipped up by the imperialists. They have sought to identify all socialist projects with the crisis of the bureaucratic societies in East Europe, and especially the revulsion that has developed, with just cause, against the monstrous Stalinist deformations. The FSLN took a correct position toward the struggles of the peoples of those countries. However, the ideological consequences of the crisis of Stalinism harmed them.

The weakness of the solidarity movement also has to be taken into consideration. The character of the aggression required a stronger response. In this respect, the traditional organizations of the labor movement — the social democracy and the Communist parties — played a limited role. Not only were they not forces for developing international solidarity but in the case of the social democrats they very often allied themselves with the sectors that make up UNO today.

The role of the Nicaraguan Stalinists (the Nicaraguan Socialist Party and the Commu-

nist Party of Nicaragua) was even more negative. They are part of UNO. By taking this attitude, these parties had revealed their true faces as allies of imperialism.

Gorbachev's policy of making a new deal with imperialism has offered a basis for a more aggressive policy by Bush, as was demonstrated in Panama.

These assessments do not lead us today to take our distance from the Sandinista revolution. To the contrary, we feel a greater identification with it. Today, the fundamental task, as the FSLN leadership has decided, is to defend the gains of the revolution. We have to defend the agrarian reform and fight to deepen it, along with the nationalization of the banks, the monopoly of foreign trade, the home ownership of the urban popular masses, the anti-imperialist foreign policy and especially the Sandinista People's Army. All these aspects are legitimized by the revolution of July 19, 1979, and continue to enjoy the support of the immense majority of the population.

Very likely, after a certain pause, the government of Violeta Chamorro will aim to wipe out these revolutionary gains. The reaction to this will be much greater than she and her international backers imagine. The revolution has suffered a setback, but it is not defeated. Immediately after the electoral reverse, the FSLN took the correct road of mass mobilization. Today, more than ever, this is the best road. And it is precisely along this road that the past errors can be corrected.

## Appeal for international solidarity

Therefore, we restate our support for the Nicaraguan people and their vanguard, the FSLN. While the revolution has not been defeated, the imperialists and those who want to sell the country to them are readying themselves to crush it. Once again, the Fourth International appeals for international solidarity, and itself pledges to build it, as a guarantee that our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua can get a better relationship of forces so that they can advance in the struggle to construct a society without exploitation and imperialist oppression.

Finally, we want to draw attention to the intentions of US imperialism to destroy the Cuban revolution. Over and above our differences with the Castro leadership, another international task today is to defend this revolution against a possible attack from the Bush government.

The situation is similar as regards El Salvador. The imperialists and the Cristiani government are going to put terrible pressure on the FMLN. The Salvadoran revolution is surrounded by hostile governments. Only a reactivation of solidarity can thwart these reactionary plans. The Central American revolution needs our full solidarity. The Fourth International pledges itself to this. ★

**T**HE SANDINISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (FSLN) suffered a surprise defeat in the February 25 elections. This result came after the biggest mass mobilizations in the history of Nicaragua, especially the vast rally in Managua on February 21.

The Nicaraguan election campaign was marked by a policy of aggression by US imperialism against a country of a little more than 3 million inhabitants. This war has cost more than 70 thousand deaths, a great number of wounded and absorbed 50% of the national budget. While US imperialism did not achieve a military victory — the contras never got enough popular support to permit the formation of a provisional government — it did manage to profoundly distort the country's economy, thereby opening the way for acute social breakdown.

The Sandinista government found itself obliged to call early elections in the hope of ending this war of aggression. This attitude must be recognized as a further sign of the deep-seated democratic character of the FSLN, which organized the freest elections in the history of this country and many others.

## Imperialist aggression limits democracy

Nonetheless, the democratic character of these elections was limited, not by any dictatorial ambitions of the FSLN but by the imperialist aggression. You cannot think about democratic elections when a war of aggression is being carried out, when an election campaign is financed the way that of the National Union of the Opposition (UNO) was when the US congress voted to give it \$10 million in aid, when terrorist attacks were planned against the life of the president of the country and with the contras active on the borders, despite the accords signed that called for demobilizing them. The triumph of UNO is the result of this aggressive policy of the imperialists.

The mere fact of having succeeded in defeating the imperialists' military plans, maintaining a democratic climate and not resorting to repressive mechanisms speaks in favor of the Sandinista leadership. Today, despite its defeat, the FSLN has gained political respect worldwide. In the medium term, this will weigh in favor of the development of the revolution.

The Fourth International has taken the side of the Nicaraguan revolution from its outset. Our support for this revolution has been unconditional.

Consequently, we have felt its successes as our own, and we feel this defeat in the same way. It is precisely this view that forces us, along with the comrades of the FSLN, to reflect on the problems that the revolution has faced and the weaknesses from which it has suffered.

# The invasion of Panama and its consequences

**THE FOLLOWING is the balance sheet of the US invasion made on January 8 by the Revolutionary Workers' Party, a revolutionary Marxist organization in Panama. The text has been somewhat shortened for space reasons.**

**T**HE United States' most recent and most brutal aggression against Panama began at 1:00 am, December 20, 1990. The empire sent in 24,000 soldiers, in what is regarded as its biggest military operation since the Vietnam war. More than 14,000 of these troops were already on the bases in the canal area recognized by the 1977 Carter-Torrijos treaty. The others were brought in, starting on December 18, mainly from Fort Ord in California; Fort Benin in Georgia; and Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

Heavy artillery and aerial bombardment was concentrated on the main barracks of the Defense Forces in Panama City and Colón, as well as in the town of Río Hato in Coclé province. A large number of them were razed to their foundations.

The assault met with strong resistance in most of these places, which was sufficient to cover their evacuation, massive distribution of arms to the civilian population and the destruction of important documents. The main defensive operation was the withdrawal of the military from the bases and their melting into the population in order to prepare for hand-to-hand fighting in struggles that took on the aspects of guerrilla warfare.

## Surprise attacks on U.S. forces

This was reflected by the virtual disappearance of the Panamanian forces from the cities at both ends of the canal and subsequent sustained surprise attacks on major US military targets around the canal itself, such as Quarry Heights, the central headquarters of the Southern Command and the Clayton base, as well as the thwarted attempt to assassinate the vice president installed by the Americans, Ricardo Arias Calderón of the Christian Democracy, and the constant harassment of the invasion forces in the first days.

At the naval base in Coco-Solo, on the Atlantic coast, isolation of the site by a body of water made retreat difficult. Here the garrison waged a heroic resistance, forcing the invading forces to retreat at various times. After that, the Americans decided to bomb the base, an action that many consider a cowardly slaughter of dozens of young Panamanians.

In San Miguelito, a densely populated neighborhood in the capital city, where one of the Defense Forces units had its headquarters, fierce and prolonged fighting took place, in which elements of the population participated. The resistance was broken only after several days of aerial bombing.

Despite the invaders' numbers and their superior military technology, less than 3 thousand trained soldiers, along with hundreds of civilians, both men and women, who had been given arms, kept the gringos out of Panama City and Colón for three days. Owing to the determined resistance in the first days, on December 23 the US government sent in another 2,00 soldiers, bringing its force up to 26 thousand.

The immediate result of the US aggression, the retreat of the Defense Force and the inability of the invading forces to control the situation, was the notorious absence of law and order in Panama City and Colón. The Dignity Battalions commanded popular expropriations of bourgeois businesses of all sizes and types, causing losses of more than 4 billion dollars, according to the employers' organizations first estimates. The Panamanian economy, hard hit by the US government's sanctions in February, was brought to its knees.

The dignity battalions played a leading role in the patriotic resistance, one that was later distorted by the invaders' press and their local acolytes. The formation was encouraged of defense committees against them in the outlying neighborhoods of the capital and the areas where the middle class live. This situation limited the mobility of the militia and Defense Force units, whose members had disguised themselves. They were informed on by civilians who saw them as defenders of Noriega.

This made it possible for the invader army to consolidate its hold. On December 24, they began the second phase of their intervention, establishing order.

Except at the Río Hato base and the Tomás Herrera Military Academy, there were no battles in the interior of the country. When the resistance seemed to decline in the capital and Colón, various military units in the interior announced

their intention not to fight, to wait for the American army and recognize the government established by the invasion.

On December 23, the new government decided to abolish the Defense Forces and establish the "Public Force." To head this institution, it appointed Colón Roberto Armijo, a former member of the general staff of the Defense Forces, who had gone into exile some months ago because of an accusation that he was involved in one of the attempted coups against Noriega.

Subsequently, lieutenant Colóns Daniel Delgado and Carlos Arosemena King, who are said to have commanded the stiff resistance in San Miguelito, joined the Public Force. Gradually almost all the officers of the Panamanian army did the same. Most of them were pensioned off or definitely retired on January 2.

More than 3,00 Panamanian, men, women, children, heroic patriots, lost their lives as a result of the invasion. The US government had to admit that Operation Just Cause was not the three-day excursion they expected.

## U.S. conceals number of casualties

The US forces have concealed the number of their casualties and losses of military equipment. The violent clashes and the constant harassment of the patriotic forces, which forced the US to send in more troops, must have caused greater losses than 24 dead and 300 wounded.

President Bush claimed that the mission had four objectives: (1) To protect the more than 35,000 Americans in the country; (2) to protect the canal; (3) to reestablish democracy in Panama; (4) to capture General Noriega. But it is well known that their real objective was to get rid of a regime that they had not been able to control since 1970 and which, justifiably or not, inspired national feelings and publicly defied the US government.

The intervention was the culmination of a destabilization plan that included a prolonged and devastating low-intensity conflict. For many months the US government had mounting interventionist operations in the republic, starting with the open and shameless participation of US embassy officials in organizing and financing the opposition parties. Then there was the imposition of economic sanctions — the illegal seizure of Panamanian money and property deposited in the United States; suspension of the annual payments for the canal; preventing US companies in Panama from paying their tax obligations.

Then when the economic sanctions failed to achieve the desired results, the US



LONDON: INVADING U.S. TROOPS SEIZE THE NOTORIOUS MAGGIE THATCHER, WHO FOR YEARS HAS ALLOWED THE BRITISH TO UNLAWFULLY DRIVE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD.

started military provocations, staging military exercises outside the canal zone. These acts of intimidation cost the life of a US soldier on December 16. He was shot by a Panamanian soldier.

The decision to invade was taken after the latest economic sanctions rebounded directly against the imperialists' allies in Panamanian society. All this happened as January 1 was approaching, when a Panamanian was supposed to take over administering the canal, and the US had rejected the functionary proposed by the regime. Moreover, it was well known that since the failed coup d'état of October 3, the government was preparing the militia for irregular combat, reinforcing and expanding the Dignity Battalions and forming Committees to Defend the Fatherland and Dignity (CODEPADI) in the public institutions.

The government installed by the invaders is made up of people who have advocated capitulation to the US for a long time, and who in the difficult conditions created by the invasion cannot even offer an appearance of independence in the relations with the empire.

The invasion has installed a government, which besides being a puppet, changes the political configuration in Central America. Another effect of the invasion, the one most desired, is that a government as subject as the present one will authorize maintaining US bases after December 31, 1999, when US forces were supposed to leave the country.

While the present situation represents a turn in favor of the US and the continuation of its presence in Panama, it does not definitely resolve the conflict between the nation and the empire, which dates from the middle of the last century. After a time, the length of which cannot be predicted, the Panamanian people will resume their struggle to build an independent, sovereign and democratic nation, when the promises it accepts today prove as hollow as all those in the past.

The new government is ushering in different times, reminiscent of those before the 1968 coup d'état, as regards oligarchic government, ties with the US and relations with the "blocs" in the world. However, the conditions it inherits, including the consciousness of mass organization, and the difficulties it will have to face as a result of the economic disaster engendered

by the sanctions and the invasion, the demands for payment of the interest on the foreign debt that the imperialists are making, unemployment, the massive layoffs underway and expected in both the public and private sectors, as well as the impossibility of meeting all needs in a short time, do not point to times of peace or prosperity.

Moreover, it is likely that such problems will soon bring out the differences in the ruling group, which is an alliance of various economic forces unable to reconcile their interests in the past and who caused the crisis that led to a military takeover in 1968. It also includes sections with different perceptions as regards the national struggle.

### Joy greets invasion

The Panamanian population responded to the invasion with a disconcerting joy, to an extent that offered a basis for the claim that the invading army were liberators. This depressing reality reflects the growing frustration of the masses at the inconsistencies of the former regime, its failure to meet their needs when they were facing falling living standards, while the functionaries of the regime were displaying their privileges and corruption was accepted as a way of life.

The military defeat of the patriotic forces was not only a result of the overwhelming military and technological superiority of the aggressor but also of the political disarray inflicted by the Noriega regime, which resisted any democratization of the state in the direction of people's power. As a method of governing, it maintained the manipulation of sections of the population and the imposition of orders from the top down without discussion. It had been obvious for a long time that this method of governing reflected the bourgeois limitations of the nationalist consciousness of the power centers of the former regime and a lack of confidence in the masses and their organizations.

The destruction of the Defense Forces seems to have solved the immediate and medium-term problems of the United States and the Panamanian oligarchy. It got rid of an institution that functioned autonomously, with uncontrolled powers, and which was publicly hostile to them.

However, the means created new dilemmas, such as deciding the character of the new armed force, its role in internal and external security, its subordination and oversight by the US and the role of this force in what is supposed to be the joint defense of the canal. For later on, the problem arises of what sort of armed force there will be in the country after December 31, 1999. Or, will the US use the disarmament and reduction of the national armed force as an excuse for not withdrawing its troops in accordance with the agreement.

By resorting to force the US has stressed its self-proclaimed manifest destiny to control the world and impose its democratic values, especially on those countries that it considers in its backyard. The violence of the US invasion has forcibly altered the history of Panama, imposing a course that was programmed a decade ago but which could not be carried out because of the opposition of objective forces within the country.

Today a direct and open alliance has been established between the Panamanian oligarchy and US imperialism, which has sufficient initiative and power to try to turn back the calendar of nationality and democracy.

The political reality since the invasion points to hard times for the masses, their movement and their organizations. The economy is prostrate, and the needs of the masses will certainly not be a priority for the new regime.

The patriotic organizations are suffering, if not the direct effects at least the indirect ones of the defeat, in which the joy produced by Noriega's ouster has thrown them on the defensive and left them struggling to survive.

The US military victory over the Defense Forces and their subsequent abolition involve the breaking of an institution that was being forged into part of the Panamanian nation and of its struggle for full sovereignty. This tragic transition in the history of the fatherland will leave permanent scars, despite the efforts of imperialism and the ruling oligarchy. These thousands of armed men recently downgraded to policemen have certainly suffered a loss of dignity and identity, and this is undoubtedly going to represent serious problems for the future in Panamanian society.

Guns were distributed massively and many of them have been recovered by the occupying army. That is going to be another complication in the medium term.

Panamanian under 40 years of age, who would have been 20 at the time of the coup d'état, do not know from their own experience the style or consequences of an oligarchic government. They only know reformism, which they came to hate. This situation, among others, will give the new regime time to take form, and this in turn will require determination and patience from the patriots in carrying out the tasks that accrue to them. ★

# Elections strengthen Baltic push for independence

THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY of the 90 seats decided in the February 24 first round of the elections for the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet were won by candidates who claimed to be committed to the perspective of rapid independence. (Theoretically, the Supreme Soviet has the right to opt for secession from the USSR, although Gorbachev is trying to create new legal barriers to that.) Candidates backed by the national-democratic front Sajudis won 72 seats, of which 13 went to members of the independent CP.

Nine seats were won by members of the independent CP not backed by Sajudis and another nine by the rump CP sponsored by Moscow. The Sajudis backed a multiparty national-liberation slate. Nine Social Democrats, two Greens, and two Christian Democrats were also elected with its support. The second round of the elections, scheduled for March 10, was not expected to change the picture, and the Sajudis-backed candidates already elected represent an absolute majority.

GERRY FOLEY

**C**OMMENTING ON the election results, *Pravda* of February 26 played up a statement by Vytautas Landsbergis, chair of Sajudis, that the only possibility now was the formation of a coalition government including Communists. Exactly what that means is far from clear, since the election results suggest that the Communist Party is divided into three groups — a wing of the independent party that Sajudis finds acceptable, a wing that it does not, and then the Moscow loyalist rump party at the other end of the spectrum.

Sajudis itself, like the other Baltic fronts, includes many Communist Party members. Where exactly do their first loyalties lie? Is there a political force in Sajudis capable of maintaining both a broad front for national-democrat goals and a consistent course toward national liberation? To what extent is Sajudis' trajectory determined by harder-line nationalist groups outside it?

In the case of Latvia, the Latvian Independence Movement (Latvian Neatkarības Kustība) has grown rapidly and exercised a strong influence on the People's Front. In Estonia, also there are a number of independence groups, and a

project for an Estonian congress, involving refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the republic Supreme Soviet. There are also hard-line independence groups in Lithuania, but it is less clear how much influence they wield.

The election results also indicate that as one-party rule is breaking down and the concrete political and economic choices begin to be posed, the unity of Sajudis as an anti-totalitarian bloc is coming apart. This is inevitable and represents a political advance, but it could present an immediate danger to the unity necessary to achieve the goals of the national movement. Edgar Savisaar, leader of the Estonian People's Front (Rahvarinne), stressed this problem in a long article in January 26 issue of *Reede* ("Friday," formerly *Sirp ja Vasar*, "Hammer and Sickle"), the Estonian writers' weekly.

Savisaar took note of the emergence of 12 parties, and warned that fragmentation could allow the Estonian Communist Party to play a balancing role to hold the national movement back. (A December poll indicated that only 9% of voters in the republic supported the CP, 2% of the Estonians and 19% of the non-Estonians, the latter making up about 40% of the republic's population).

In the February 23 issue of *Reede*, Mark Tarmak cited the Sajudis leader Landsbergis as saying that the Lithuanian election was a contest between the independent CP and Sajudis. If that was so, it was a tricky sort of competition, since Sajudis backed most of the members of the independent CP elected in the first round. Tarmak also cited Rumualdas Ozolas, a member of the bureau of the independent Lithuanian CP, who was on the list backed by Sajudis, as saying that the independent Lithuanian republic should be restored in May at the latest.

The Russian second secretary of the party (as a general rule, the second secretaries of the republic CPs are Russians), Vladimir Berezov was cited as saying that the Baltic countries had to consider how to exert an influence in negotiations in Moscow, since the support of the democratic forces was essential to winning their objective.

The first secretary of the Lithuanian CP, Algirdas Brazauskas was cited in the February 24 issue of *Literatura un Mokslo*, the paper of the Latvian creative workers' unions, as saying that negotiations with Moscow on the renewal of Lithuanian statehood should begin as soon as possible. He thought that the question would be decided by the newly elected republic Supreme Soviet, and that independence might be declared in July, on the seventieth anniversary of the Lithuanian-Soviet peace treaty.

## Debate on tactics for achieving independence

As independence has been accepted as an immediate objective by the Baltic national-democratic fronts, the question of the tactics of achieving it is also being sharply debated. For example, in the February 16 issue of *Reede*, Marju Lauristin, a leader of the People's Front and now of the newly founded Social Democratic Party, argued against the Estonian Congress and for centering attention on the republic Supreme Soviet, among other things, on the basis of what she considered to be the attitude of the Western powers.

"We are already in a transitional period. The annexed territory of the Estonian republic, called the Estonian SSR, is in transition to an independent Estonian republic. We all have an interest in assuring that this transition is as painless as possible for all inhabitants of Estonia, and without big economic and social catastrophes. Today all Estonian political forces that talk about independence stress that it must come about by the parliamentary road." Lauristin put a great stress on the problem of political legitimacy and avoiding confrontation.

The results of the March 18 elections to the Estonian Supreme Soviet, also likely to bring victory for forces pledged to independence, will probably create a field for maneuver as complex as the one that

seems to have emerged in Lithuania. The March 1 *Pravda* carried a long article by I. Teterin, the paper's correspondent in Tallin. He described a situation in the Estonian CP that seems rather similar to the one in the Lithuanian CP before the Moscow-backed split.

"Until recently, the Communist Party of Estonia distanced itself from outright separatist tendencies. In the plenums of the party committees, it was firmly declared that secession from the USSR was impossible. An ugly picture was given of political groups such as the National Independence Party, the Citizens' Committees and so on. But gradually in the Communist Party ranks also the idea of national self-determination began to be debated."

### Conflict of positions at Estonian CP conference

Thus, two positions appeared at the republic party's conference, sharpened, Teterin said, by a conflict between Estonians and non-Estonians. "The first variant was called 'A Program for Renewing the Communist Party of Estonia.' In this, the present period in Estonia is described as transitional. This period will end when Estonia is restored as an independent state. The party will be pledged to fight for an independent Estonia and a democratic society similar to the Scandinavian countries. Its relations with CPSU will be only those of allies, based on common ideology.

"The second variant is, more modestly called, 'An Action Program.' It proclaims a policy aimed above all at achieving general human values, building a society based on taking up the needs of the individual. The republic will be a sovereign state and a member of the Soviet federation, that is, it will be a constitutional state. Therefore, Estonia will have its own citizenship, will participate in the activity of the international organizations and its elected government will decide all questions of its internal life. The Estonian Communist Party will be an inalienable part of the CPSU."

*Pravda's* correspondent kept a guarded tone, but wrote: "You will agree that it seemed strange when from the platform of the congress, the second secretary of the Paida district, A. Maarend, said: 'Today the Communist Party is a structure imposing an occupation regime on Estonia. Instead a different party should be formed, and the Communist Party's assets should be turned over to the organs of local self-government.'"

Insidiously, Teterin continued: "What kept the delegates from a split? I think that not the least factor was the assessment the resolutions of the Twentieth Congress of the Lithuanian CP at the February plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU." He was referring to the start of the excommunication of the Lithuanian CP majority

and Moscow throwing its material weight behind the loyalist split off.

In general, Teterin took a sinuous tack. For example, he wrote... "the idea of civil peace [compromise with non-Estonians] is beginning to be developed even by the radical political groups that stand on hard-line separatist positions. Thus, after the well-known assembly in Tallin on February 2 that loudly adopted a 'Declaration on the Question of Achieving the Independence of Estonia,' characteristic documents appeared in the press. The main Citizens Committee said: 'Once again, we assure the Russians, Slavs and other nationalities that in the democratic Estonian republic there will be no room for discrimination on the basis of nationality.'"

This, Teterin said, "was a political slap in the face to the Communist Party. With an absolute majority in the Supreme Soviet of the Republic, the Communists have voted in more than a few laws in the recent period containing elements of discrimination, such as the residence requirement messing up the electoral system, linguistic restrictions and so on."

These arguments are totally perfidious. First, they slip in the idea, without any proof, that the radical nationalist groups previously favored discrimination against non-Estonians. Secondly, the residence requirement voted by the republic parliament and thrown out by the constitutional tribunal of the USSR was not based on nationality but length of residence. Similar restrictions exist under many federal systems where national differences are not a factor.

### Lack of consistent ideological conception

The Estonian CP's disarray was profound: "Unfortunately, this idea of civil peace could not change the course of the discussion. The reason for this, in my opinion was correctly characterized by Estonian CP Central Committee member L. Annus: 'The state of things in the Communist Party of Estonia cannot be any different today because it lacks a consistent ideological conception accepted by all.'"

The serpentine approach of Teterin, as opposed to the usual crudity of such attacks, is obviously due to the relationship of forces. Moscow is politically on the defensive, with its local instrument of rule breaking its neck trying to adjust to a situation that has gone out of control. The Estonian CP's only remaining political advantage is the apparent support of about a fifth of the non-Estonian population. It is trying to parlay that for all it is worth.

For example, in an answer to Savisaar's article in the January 26 *Reede*, in the February 16 issue of the same paper, Eduard Tinn, representing the CP, argued that the Estonian CP was the only force capa-

ble of solving "the Russian question" in Estonia. "If we are heading for a normal democratic state, do we want in the future parliament separate parties representing a non-Estonian population of 40% — that is, parties formed on ethnic and linguistic principles?"

But what is the special attraction of the CP for non-Estonians, if not its identification with the power of the Russian state to defend them against real or feared pressures from the native population? The logic of that is not the CP serving as a bridge between the different communities but its surviving on the basis of inciting, or pandering to the fears of the non-Estonians. The majority of non-Estonians have apparently been alienated from it for exactly the same reason — its identification with the Great Russian Stalinist dictatorship. The cause of democracy has been taken up most consistently and energetically by the national democratic movement.

### People's Front — democratic as well as nationalist

In *Literatura un Maksla* of February 24, Viktors Daugmalis denounced attempts by the local and all-Union CP to present the People's Front as simply nationalist and not democratic as deliberate provocations. In Latvia, the non-natives form nearly half the population, and Moscow has responded to the growth and radicalization of national sentiment in a brutal way. Daugmalis mentioned many threats, including a picket of military men with the slogan "Today, the army is neutral," suggesting that tomorrow it might not be. There has been a strident campaign about alleged insults to the military.

*Pravda* of February 22 carried a "letter from Soviet veterans" denouncing the moves of the Latvian Supreme Soviet to overturn the old Stalinist claims about the Latvian people demanding incorporation of their country into the USSR. On February 24, it ran a statement from the Council of Ministers of the USSR, called, of all things, "Against the Distortion of Historic Truth," also reasserting the old big lies, now thoroughly discredited both inside and outside of the Soviet Union.

The political situation in the Baltic republics is becoming more and more unstable, and it has a key importance for the democratic movement throughout the USSR.

Despite the rise of other mass national-democratic movements, including one in the decisive Ukraine, they remain the cockpit of the national-democratic struggle, and the moves toward independence that now seem certain to follow the completion of the legislative elections in these republics will test the political and tactical capacities of both the national-democratic leaders and the guard dogs of the Great Russian bureaucracy to their fullest. ★

# "We want to be a part of every political decision"

INA Merkel is the author of the Manifesto for an Independent Women's Movement adopted by the participants in the festival that launched the Independent Federation of Women on December 3 at the Volksbühne in Berlin. At the culmination of this meeting, she was designated one of the representatives of this federation, and in this capacity she took part in the preparatory commissions for the round table between the government and the opposition movements. In between these various meetings and her courses at the Humboldt University, where she is a teacher, she was good enough to answer the questions posed by *Cahiers du féminisme*.

The following interview was given to Anne-Marie Granger in Berlin on January 16, 1990.

**T**he association for which you are a spokesperson has taken the name "Independent Federation of Women." What do you mean by "independent"?

For us, this means two things. First of all independent from any party. That is something fundamental in our eyes. The only women's association that existed up until now, the DFD, was completely subordinated to the party, to the SED. But this also means that each of the groups that make up this federation is independent of the other groups and free to develop its own policy. Because of our history, there is a strong tendency among us in the GDR to expect everything to come from above, to operate in accordance with a very centralized model. This tendency, of course, also exists among women. We want to break with that. None of us wants to become a leader of a centralized organization that dictates to others what they have to do.

For us, this respect for the autonomy of every group is not contradictory to a desire to engage in common work, to coordinate our activities. We are now working out a common minimum program for all these groups, which will be the platform of the federation, and we have set up a coordinating council made up of representatives of the various groups.

This council regularly elects spokespersons who can take positions publicly in the name of the women's movement. We pay a lot of attention to assuring that the political spectrum represented in the coordinating council is reflected in the choice of spokespersons.

**■ What are your primary demands?**

The first demand put forward is for involvement in all political decisions. In particular, we want a "women's delegate" at all levels of decision making, with a right of veto over measures concerning women. This right would make it possible to open a broad public debate when a decision seems to go against the interests of women.

We also want to get an equality law that would give every woman the right to sue if she thought there was discrimination — for example if it turned out that an enterprise favored hiring men because of so-called female absenteeism, that is, maternity leaves (and this is happening more and more often). It is necessary also to take a new look at our system of labor contracts. They do formally guarantee "equal pay for equal work," but women rarely turn up in the same jobs as men, and there is no definition of what is "equal work." The result is that women are always more poorly paid. We demand that women's wages be adjusted immediately to bring them up to the level of men.

Another of our leading demands is for a shorter workweek. We don't even have a 40 hour week; the workweek is about 42 hours and 45 minutes, and we only get 18 days paid leave a year! In my opinion, there is nothing unrealistic about this demand. Studies by German sociologists have shown that today 30 per cent of worktime is wasted time. People don't work because of a lack of motivation. Why not use this slack to cut the workweek? This would be good for everyone, and would increase the motivation to work.

Of course, the government does not want to hear of this. We are always being told that we first have to tighten our belts and work harder before thinking of distributing the surplus created. So, we have been waiting for 40 years. The only result is that our living standard has dropped! People are sick of this situation. If the government doesn't get a move on to improve the living standard and the quality of life, flight to West Germany, already very large, is going to go on increasing.

If it keeps on like this, we will soon have a matriarchy in East Germany, because it is above all the men who are taking off for the West. For women, it is much harder to find work in West Germany. But they stay also because here there are social provisions that are not unimportant for them — very cheap day-care centers, rents incomparably lower than in the West.

**■ From the standpoint of public services, East Germany has nothing to envy other countries for.**

It is very important, of course, to have enough day-care centers, kindergartens, primary schools. But if you have children, it is not only in order to have them looked after somewhere, to always turn them over to someone else! This is why our movement is very sensitive to the demand for increasing free time, for us and our children, and for men, who should be able to pay more attention to their children. Among us, almost all women have children, including the intellectuals. And, as feminists, their thinking is not based only on their own situation but also on the future they want to build for their children.

The environment is another one of our major concerns. All the inhabitants of the GDR are very sensitive to this question, because the extent of pollution in this country is intolerable. There are whole areas that should be declared uninhabitable. Places like Bieterfeld or Leipzig are so polluted that the people there cough all the time. And for babies, you had better not use tap water! So we say that there has to be a program for radically restructuring society in order to stop the destruction of our environment. We don't want to make our children pay the price for a policy that for decades has totally ignored these questions. We want to build a future for them where the environment will no longer represent a constant threat, where they can still swim in the sea and the streams and breathe air that deserves the name!

**■ As a representative of the women's movement, you are now participating in the preparatory commissions for the round table, alongside the opposition organizations. What sort of relations do you have with them?**

All the opposition groups that have arisen in recent months know now that they have to take us into consideration, and





they are aware that they can no longer dismiss the "women's question" with a wave of the hand. No one wants to attack us publicly any longer or say that all this is unimportant. But this does not mean that these groups automatically pick up the questions that we have raised! In fact, we always find ourselves faced with the same old problem — the structures of these organizations are dominated by men. Engaging in politics means adapting to this male model. And this is what we are no longer willing to do!

One of the ways of changing this situation in my opinion, is establishing quotas at all levels. I think that this should be made an essential criterion for judging the various opposition groups. The problem is that the women themselves are often against quotas, because they are afraid of being elected only on that basis, as women and not for their own capacities and qualities (I think you have the same debate). But you don't have to stay there. Being elected as a woman also means having the chance to develop your capacities; that can be a starting point for engaging in politics and gaining recognition.

However, my feeling is that we are not yet at a point where we can force through quotas. Neues Forum, for example, has finally declared against quotas in its own organization. And for the coming elections, I am afraid that the number of women in parliament, which is now a third, will drop considerably.

#### ■ Do you intend to participate in these elections, and if so in what form?

There is a debate now at the round table over the new electoral law, which will decide who has the right to run in these

elections — only political parties or also "citizens movements"?<sup>1</sup> For our part, we are favorable to the second solution. We consider our movement as a sort of movement that goes beyond parties, bringing together women of various viewpoints, who often belong to other political organizations. We think that it should be able to be represented as such in parliament, and be able to play an important role there. But a good part of the members of the round table want to restrict participation in the elections to political parties, and broad movements may be excluded.

This could abruptly revive a debate in our movement that up until now we have taken up only at a national meeting of the coordinating committee. Should we form a women's or feminist party? A group of women in Jena has advocated this project from the beginning. Personally, I think that this would not be a good thing, especially because it would have

consequences for our form of organization. It would impel us to adopt a centralized structure, which most of us reject. Undoubtedly, we will decide to stay in the extra-parliamentary opposition, and on this basis make criticisms, push for public debate and develop our demands.

Besides, the various opposition parties have offered us a place on their slates — to be their "token women," in my opinion. As far as I'm concerned, there are only two possibilities: either we stay in the extra-parliamentary opposition, or we form a women's fraction in the parliament. We might consider a common front with the New Forum or the United Left. But even in that case, we would insist on having our own program, our own slate and our own fraction in parliament.<sup>2</sup>

All these questions will be discussed at our national coordinating committee meeting on January 20. We also have to round out a catalogue of demands that we will submit to the parties running in the elections.

#### ■ How do you envisage the future?

In the manifesto that all the women's groups agreed on in December, there is a phrase that clearly says what we want; it is a socialist society. This has not aroused any particular debate. It was a position found just about everywhere in the democratic movement at the time. But the atmosphere in the country is no longer the same. There are a lot of discussions around this question. We can no longer do without a debate over what we mean by "socialism." Content has to be given back to this word.

Today, the demand for a "greater Germany" is more and more getting the upper hand, for one simple reason — people see

the wealth and consumer possibilities in West Germany; they want to be able to enjoy them and live like those in the West. They think that everything is going well over there, and they say simply: Why not do like them? More and more people and organizations are patterning themselves on the Western model. People are drafting laws that try to copy what exists in West Germany. But if they would look more closely, they would see that not everything is going so well in West Germany.

What is dramatic in this context, is the lack of imagination, the lack of ideas of all the opposition currents, their inability to put across an alternative model. Even though we, the women's movement, have alternative proposals, especially for the environment, we lack credibility, because we do not have the means for putting these ideas into practice. Consequently, what we are seeing today is an attempt to make East Germany compatible with the West German system. Our country is thus getting ready to be "swallowed up" by West Germany, and that will be to the detriment of the East German population, because the Federal Republic is not ready to pay enough to compensate for the social inequalities.

If we were cleverer, we would say, "OK, let's have immediate reunification, but let West Germany put its money where its mouth is, and bear the cost of the equalization process." It would say no, and that would open up a field of action. But we are too dumb, and we say: "Wait, Kohl is going to save East Germany from disaster." And up till now what has happened? He has set the conditions and not us. From week to week, he poses new conditions. We try to adjust ourselves to them, and he is paying practically nothing!

It seems to be now inevitable that this evolution will run its course. I think, in any case, that our country will go through capitalism. We have to go through the experience ourselves, to see really what a society of "consumer terrorism" is. It seems absolutely unrealistic to think that we can pass directly from an economy of poverty to an alternative system.

In fact, I am quite pessimistic, not only with regard to our future but in a broader context, because I do not see any possible radical alternative, when one is so necessary, especially with respect to the exploitation of the third world or with respect to the destruction of our environment. All the scientists seem to agree that this world still has another 35 years to go. That is the perspective we all face, including you. ★

1. Up until now, in the parliamentary elections, a certain number of seats were reserved for the official mass organizations (women, youth). The women's organization (DFD) thus had 60 seats out of 470.

2. The new electoral law adopted since this interview allows "broad movements" to run in the elections on the same basis as the political parties. The Independent Women's Federation has decided to put up its own candidates in the framework of an alliance with the United Left and the Greens.

ON DECEMBER 3 last year, the first coordinating meeting of women's groups took place in Berlin. More than 1,000 women took part, most between the ages of 24 and 45. A few men were also present. There were women from the ex-SED (Communist party), the Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschland (DFD — the official women's organization) the journal *Für Dich* ("For You"), representatives of recently formed groups like the Lila Offensive, and women from the United Left, writers, artists and so on. They were there to found the Autonomous Movement of Women, elect their two representatives to the Round Table and set out their demands for a new policy towards women.

One of the high points of the meeting was the reading by Ina Merkel of the United Left of a radical eight-point manifesto of which large extracts are published below.

**S**OME SAY that the "women question" is solved. Others say that it is not the main problem today, but some of us say that now is the time to put it on the agenda. But what is it, this "women question"?

We, women, say this: the social changes in the GDR were set off by the masses in the streets. Women were present at all stages of this process. They were in the forefront and have participated in the struggle, they have been affected by the massive exodus of the population and were victims of the usurpers of power. But as soon as the time came to work out the perspectives for the renewal of socialist society, women found themselves once again excluded.

"The country needs new men" runs one of the slogans endlessly repeated in recent weeks. Don't we need new women as well? The new leader Modrow has a woman deputy: a new beginning?

The society is going through a profound

## Birth of independent women's movement in the GDR

crisis. Today, as before, thousands of citizens are leaving the country. The leading party is morally bankrupt. It seems likely that Socialism is going to disappear as a system. The other side is licking its lips.

We must oppose this apparently inevitable evolution with an alternative model of society. But who today will listen to us when we speak about a renovated Socialism? Nonetheless, this country must give us the opportunity to build a society whose real aim is to permit the expression of individual potential: otherwise this country will disappear. A society in which work and consumption, politics and way of life would be modelled by the self-determining subjects, who govern themselves. This implies the optimal development of the economy, in such a way that it ceases to dominate people's needs and aspirations, but allows social spaces, free time and objective conditions favourable to individual development to be created.

This does not rule out political power, but it does exclude the subjection of the individual to this power. This implies radically new economic and political mechanisms and structures, that can guarantee social progress. It means that people can intervene in the process of social development and are able to constantly renew and correct it.

It is clear that a reform of the economy and political system is necessary, but the changes in the way of life, needs and social situation must not be postponed once again with the excuse that it depends on others. We must have alternative ideas about ways of living. We must demand that the parties and political movements tell us what perspectives a particular strategy involves in this respect. Our hopes, the problems of women, must also become a constituent part of an alternative social project.

We must uphold the idea that "women's issues" are not some secondary social problem, but are vital and fundamental. They are about the way society lives, its reproduction, its possibilities for development and its goals. That is why, if we as women want to ensure that our own specific interests, that flow from our particular situation and specific experience, are really taken into account in a project for a modern society, we must ourselves have a

global approach to society.

What might the main themes of such a conception be? Which are general questions and which are specific to women?

1. In recent years this society has been careering towards the abyss. We have witnessed a rapid deterioration in living conditions and the social situation. This development has been clearly shown by the worsening of relations between women and men, in rising divorce rates and the fall in the birth-rate. It is also reflected in the fall in living standards for single mothers and by a shameful neglect of elder women, those who carried the burden of reconstruction on their shoulders after 1945.

But this regression is also apparent where no one wants to see it: in the fall in the wages of women and men, in the shrinking of possibilities for women and men to influence their material and cultural living conditions, and the lessening of their political power. It is women who have had to compensate by extra work for the failures of the social services. Women are more and more at risk from male aggression. The transformation of the female body into a sexual object has become a social fact.

In the end, it will be our children who will be the victims of our inability to evolve. They are the ones who will inherit the consequences of dozens of years of economic improvidence and neglect of the environment. They suffer from the nervousness and lack of feelings of mothers and fathers under extreme stress. They are the victims of an anachronistic system of



upbringing.

These are some of the most serious socio-cultural consequences of state and bureaucratic Socialism. The arbitrary power of a male elite has led this country to the edge of disaster. It is men who bear the major part of the responsibility for the policies pursued during recent decades, and above all those who have sustained these policies as political leaders, directors and enterprise managers. Women also bear a political responsibility for this situation, but they find themselves in subordinate positions in every domain.

2. We are today confronted by the fact that, for many of our citizens, both men and women, any kind of social or cultural identification with Socialism may collapse. Already, recourse is being made to the "land of our fathers". But we have to ask ourselves if we are able to oppose to the ideas of reunification or unification a real socialist alternative, which can justify the effort of tying oneself down? What future can we offer in such a catastrophic social situation, what perspectives are worth the effort of staying here?

Do you want us, perhaps, to join up with the gentlemen of Bonn, and replace the dictatorship of the Politburo with that of the Chancellor's office?

From the point of view of women, reunification would mean three steps backwards. In summary form these would mean: the return of women to the home. We would have to fight once more for the right to work, for a place for our children in a kindergarten, and for canteens. That would be the same as selling off hard-won rights instead of going onto a new stage. Women have no country to lose; they have a world to win. Now is the time to seize the opportunity to enhance the diversity of our ways of life, our individual differences, our aspirations and demands, in the framework of a renewal of Socialism. We must raise up our women's movement to the level that the times demand. We must join up with the left forces in Europe and speak out for a multicultural society, in which everybody can live in their own way, according to their national, cultural and social specificities. We must be vigilant that no one in our country is excluded because of their origins, handicaps or, simply, difference. Let us create conditions for moving towards relations of solidarity between men and women, between parents and children, between young and old, between the sick and the well....

5. A radical quota policy, that is to say he immediate feminization of half of the important positions in society, is the condition for real democratization. Quotas and democratization are inseparable conditions for political renewal. Certainly, the women question" presents the majority of organizations and political parties with a problem, but it is not always posed publicly. That is why we need our own political organization, a movement that unites and acts in such a way as to ensure that the

problems of women are widely debated and become political questions.

It is only when women are proportionally represented that they will be able to rise above their interests as a marginalized social group and concern themselves, in the same way as men, with global political questions. It is precisely because women are not a social minority, but make up half of humanity, that they must be able to say their word on all the questions concerning humanity. A women's movement that only orientated towards specifically women's issues and had no overall social conception would marginalize itself.

6. This is why we defend the idea of a fourfold separation of powers. The classical separation between the legislative, executive and judicial powers must be completed by a fourth power, public

democracy.

We are also in favour of the creation of a wide network of women's media, including journals, radio and TV channels and stations, but also cultural centres and research institutes about women — as well as the creation of numerous organs of democratic representation concerned with problems of daily life, consumption, education and upbringing, price and wage policies.

We need consumers' organizations that can enforce the conformity of products to ecological needs and autonomous associations of parents that can influence the content of what is taught and educational methods. And we need a mass of basic initiatives and self-organized groups that can act directly in the country. It is this latter that is perhaps the most urgent. ★

## “Careers for Women”

**FEMINIST THEMES** have begun to be raised in debates in the official institutions in the USSR and in the official press. The following article is from the February 15 issue of *Pravda*, the organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The introduction seems to be by the *Pravda* editors.

**N. ZAKHAROVA and N. RIMASHEVSKAYA**

**W**E have to try to assure — it was remarked at the Nineteenth All-union Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union — that the situation is really changed, so that a broad road is opened up for women into the leading bodies at every level, so that questions directly affecting women's interests are not decided without their participation and without their opinions having a determining weight. The correct conclusion that we draw is that the question of “careers for women” deserves the attention of many all-union and republic authorities, and requires a scientific approach, in other words, a complex action program.

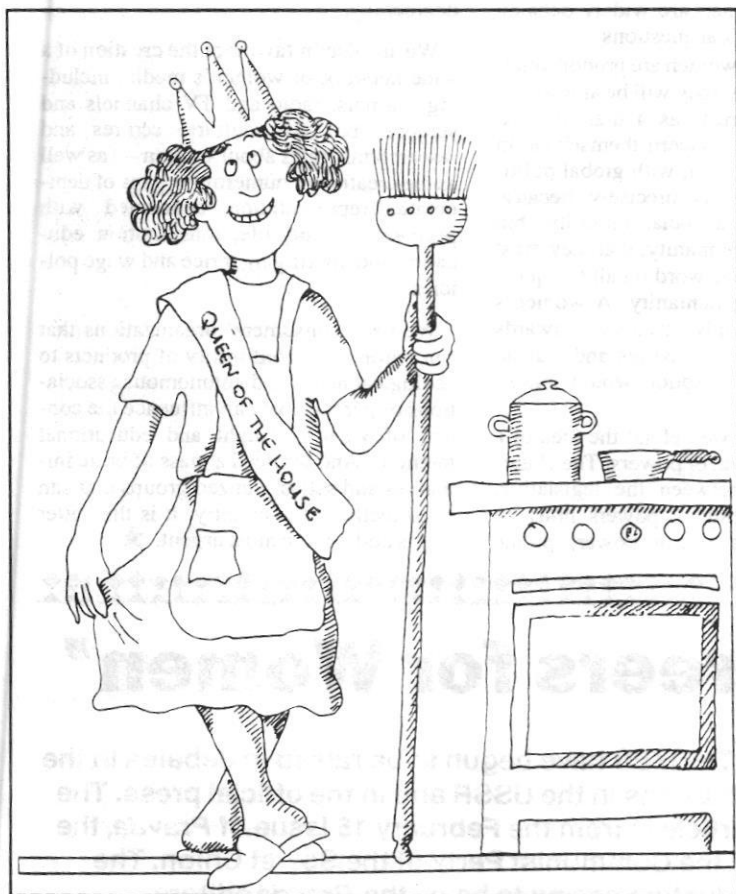
A TYPICAL situation. An institute for raising the level of skills of supervisory personnel. Only men in the auditorium. They represent various ages, professions and nationalities. We talked with them about the position of women today. They were all of the same opinion. Emancipation had its negative side. Women are forced to bear a double burden. How can this acute problem be solved?

Many of them think that men's wages

should be raised as much as possible, so as to ease the burden of mothers in production. By attracting women in large numbers into work outside the home, we supposedly only lose — families break down, children are badly educated, the “quality” of the future generations is declining. Is that the way it is?

A radical change in the position of women and wide acceptance of the principle of their equality with men in all areas of life is a feature of the twentieth century. Economic and social progress is impossible without including the “weaker sex,” which represents half of the spiritual and intellectual potential of humanity, in all spheres. However, there is no real equality in the situations of men and women. This is one of the most contradictory social problems today.

Let us look back to the first decrees of Soviet power. They established equality of political and civil rights and created the conditions for social and spiritual liberation. We were the most progressive country. Women began to be incorporated rapidly into production. In a short time, we achieved one of the highest percentages of women at work in the world. Today more than 90% of working-age women are involved in the economy, representing



practically half of all workers.

However, in the notorious chase after numbers, the qualitative aspects of women's employment were overlooked. Where and at what are women working? They are "concentrated" in the feminized industries, where wages are 25% to 30% lower than average. Men eagerly turn over the hard physical labor to them. About 4 million women are working in conditions that violate the labor code. Night shifts are especially for them. Some 3.8 million women work nights.

In general, women's jobs are "horizontal," that is without prospects for promotion. Generally, the "vertical" jobs are held by men.

### Few women in supervisory roles

Among the supervisory personnel of plants and production units, as well as among chief engineers and their deputies, women make up only 12%. They represent 14% of heads of workshops and their deputies. Even in those industries where they represent a majority of the workers, there are few in supervisory roles. In light industry, it is 31%; in textiles, 21%, and in the food industry only 14%.

There are only a few individual women in the party and soviet leading bodies. A woman was just recently confirmed as a deputy premier. Until recently, the pro-

portion of women in the soviets was kept high artificially by means of a quota. In the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies, the quota was partially removed (deputies from the women's councils got 75 seats). This led to a fall in the percentage of women in the highest legislative body from 33% to 15.6%. In the elections for the local Soviets, it is expected that there will be an even lower percentage of women deputies.

Of course, there are objective reasons for these phenomena — less professional preparation, a double burden of work and interruptions of work to bear children. But the main factor is the outdated stereotype of the role and destiny of women, of their capacities, of their place in social progress.

A patriarchal notion survives in our society that consigns women to "the home," and the role of active participants in society to men. It is not considered that women are attracted to work as an area for fulfilling themselves. We close our eyes to the fact that the percentage of women who would be content not to work, even under conditions of full material prosperity, is small and declining with the advance of education.

Is it not time for all of us to consider whether, in returning women primarily to the home, freeing them in a way from their double burden, we are not in fact trying to fill some gaps in the development of our social infrastructure, to make a link between some negative social processes with an orientation of women toward work outside the home? It is no secret that many families do not have proper housing and that public services are on a low level. As regards the quality of the work of the institutions for children, of the shops and health facilities, we have simply gotten sick of reading about this in the press.

So, women in the home is supposed to be the panacea for all ills. But they cannot turn the wheel of history back. The negative phenomena in our life — the weakening of family ties, drug addiction, the growth of juvenile delinquency, abandoned old people — are not the result of any natural separation of the functions of men and women but a testimony of the transition in our age from patriarchal relations to egalitarian ones based on freedom of choice. There is only one solution for this — to offer the possibility for the latter relations to develop rather than try to thwart them.

And in the meantime, we have no statistics showing the dynamic of change, the employment of women or the increase in their skills. How many of them are on the list of qualified personnel in the enterprises? There is no answer to that question. Preference in promotion is always given to men.

However, practical experience shows that women cope no worse than men with the responsibilities of supervisors. The only perceptible difference is in the style of leadership. And despite the preference given to supervisors who fit the male stereotype, no one has been able to demonstrate its superiority. This style, by the way, is rooted in the period characterized by commandist and administrative voluntarist methods. In the conditions of such competition, women seeking to take leading responsibilities had to have purely masculine qualities.

### Laying track and tarring roads

You hear the view that a career is incompatible with femininity. This goes hand in hand with the stereotypes about the roles of men and women, about social subordination.

But is femininity compatible with laying railway track or tarring roads? Or are we nostalgic for the fine ladies of the second half of the eighteenth century? Then why do we waste so much resources on educating women and take pride in the fact that the rise of the educational level of women is faster than that of the "stronger sex?" And if women achieve professional success, that is more often explained by luck than by their capacities.

The conflict between family and job responsibilities tends not to be taken into consideration. More precisely, this problem is given an exclusively "feminine" character. The solutions go in the direction of creating favorable conditions for their meeting both types of responsibility.

And what do the men do, just stand aside? The way it happens is that the basic responsibility for family affairs is put on wives. But psychologists say that the involvement of men in the family enriches marriage and has a good influence on children. Today, for some reason, nothing is said about the feminization of ch-

rearing.

Of course, mothers feel the "double burden" more strongly and are less career oriented. But women without children are often accused of not wanting to fulfill their "natural destiny."

Men have a considerable influence on women's professional orientation. Women are to an extent dependent on their willingness to help with the household tasks. However, the main factor is not so much men sharing in the work, but how tolerant an attitude they take to their wives' professional successes.

When women achieve their goals and become leaders, they often stress their husband's helping role. But if women completely free their husbands from household cares, the men do not appreciate this as one of the reasons for their being able to pursue a career.

Yes, many women are not career oriented. Day-to-day cares and family responsibilities get in the way. But this precisely is often considered one of the basic reasons for the under-representation of women at various levels of administration. No! Women repress their desire to grow because they fear that in the present conditions this will only complicate their lives.

### "A citizenship in a big desk chair"

We should remember the psychological barrier also. The skepticism that exists about women's capacities for leadership also engenders in them an underestimation of their capacities, a lack of confidence in their own abilities. The problem is not a lack of desire to pursue a "career" but the reaction of the society to "a citizenship in a big desk chair." Thus, women not uncommonly have to hide their aspirations, to adapt to the demands of traditional thinking. This leads to stress and family conflicts.

Nerves, dissatisfaction, the lack of individual fulfillment is the price that women pay. The loss of exceptional human and economic resources is the price that society pays. Let us look the reality in the face. Yes, we have extensive constitutional rights. But equality should show up also in the statistics. Let us take another look at them. Out of men with high-school and university education, 48% hold leading positions. Among women, more of whom have education, it is only 7%.

Such facts require not only careful consideration but practical steps to solve "women's" problems.

Let us hope that in the Government Program for Improving the Situation of Women and the Family in the USSR, questions of the professional advancement of women will not be ignored.

It is time to start a rounded and unprejudiced discussion about careers for women, about advancing women to the highest posts. Unquestionably many of them are qualified. ★

## INTRODUCTION

THE following article, translated from issue no. 1-2/1990 of the journal *Ost-West Gegeninformationen*, published in Graz in Austria, gives a historical overview of the development and problems of the feminist movement in the Yugoslav republic of Slovenia.

Slovenia, with some 2 million inhabitants, is the most western and most economically developed Republic of the Yugoslav Federation. In the last decade independent groups of all kinds, including feminist groups, have sprung up there, with the toleration of the local Communist Party. At the same time, Slovenia has found itself under increasing pressure from the powerful Serb-centralist wave unleashed by Serb CP leader and nationalist demagogue Slobodan Milosevic, a wave which has had disastrous effects in the majority Albanian province of Kosovo.

Our readers should be aware that the editors of *IV* would not use the term "socialism" to describe the system that has existed in Yugoslavia since the Second World War.

# A women's movement in an embattled nation

AT PRESENT it is difficult to write about the situation of women in Slovenia, and even harder to write about their situation in Yugoslavia as a whole, especially if we try to look at women as a single united group over and above the existing differences. Furthermore, the political landscape of Slovenia and Yugoslavia has changed fundamentally in recent years, and there are almost no serious studies of the impact of these changes on women.

Before talking about recent developments I want to make a few important historical points.

More than 40 years of Socialism and the much stronger weight of tradition are very important for a "small nation" such as Slovenia. It would be useless speculation to decide which is the more important for our theme. The conditions that determine the situation of women in the postwar period were created by a specific mixture of tradition and Socialism. They are hard to understand from outside. Nonetheless I will try to do the impossible.

VLASTA JALUSIC

IT WAS NOT so long ago here that — from the legal point of view — almost all Slovenian women shared the situation of Austrian women. Although it was somewhat worse than in Austria, both were subject to Viennese law until the break-up of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918. Furthermore the earliest feminist initiatives in Slovenia were in every respect under the influence of the Austrian feminist organizations (for example, the radical women's movement around the turn of the century).

There have been women's organizations and women's unions in Slovenia since the 1870s, but feminism did not have a direct or important influence on

the majority of Slovenian women. Despite some individual cases where feminist ideas had a public impact, there was no mass women's movement.

This was true even in 1901 when the radical feminist periodical *Slovenka* was appearing in Trieste and the Social Democrat, Karel Linhart — one of the few men who at that time took the side of women — promoted the writer Zafka Kveder as the leading figure of Slovene feminism. There were many reasons why the Slovene women's movement at the turn of the century could not achieve a wider resonance. However, I believe that it would be true to say that the so-called "need for national unity" was one of the basic factors. This

argument was deployed more than once to push the specific interests of women into the background.

In the "psychic landscape" of the Slovene nation there is a very insidious and potent picture of the "woman-mother", who appears very early on in our literature. The central feature of this "woman-mother" is her readiness for self-sacrifice, that mostly serves to preserve national identity at the individual level. In the national fantasy, this generous and indestructible woman stands up as an imaginary protector against the external enemy. She is always at hand when national unity is needed. In this way, the difference between the sexes within the nation is exorcized. In times of danger the political leaders of the nation have sought to conjure up a closely-knit community, structured like a family.

An example of the liquidation of the demands of women into the "national interest" is to be seen at the time of the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) in 1918. The new state registered a retreat with regard to women's rights in many fields, not only because women did not have the right to vote, but because many women, for example, teachers in *Steuerland*, lost the right to vote that they had previously won in struggle. There was a danger that the old Serbian patriarchal family would spread throughout the whole territory of the kingdom.

## Apolitical and defensive attitude

The few historical studies of the position of women before the Second World War give the overwhelming impression that these women almost always took an apolitical and defensive attitude including with regard to their own situation. The exceptions were periods of great danger. This picture is certainly true if we look at things from the point of view of traditional historiography. But there are in fact also signs very early on of opposition amongst women, although, again, these did not result in a mass women's movement.

It is questionable whether we can take the mass women's organizations that were founded in the Second World War as exceptions. In my view, the basis of these was precisely the previously mentioned "women's duty" to sustain the roots of the nation. The Women's Anti-Fascist League arose as a result of an agreement between several political currents in Slovenia, although it became a semi-independent organization of women workers under the control of the Communist Party.

The introduction of Socialism after four years of struggle against the occupation, which was also a kind of civil war, meant that the CP seized power. On the one hand

with tradition but not a real modernization of society. Quite the reverse: the self-management system could develop even on the basis of a non-modern society, in which there was neither civil society nor politics in the real sense. Thus, the old ways of thinking could thrive on a new basis.

In the new system, women obtained so-called "formal" rights, such as the right to vote and other forms of legal equality. However we have to remember that these had to exist without the rule of law and other political and human rights. In a state where everything that is not expressly permitted is forbidden, and where political freedom is labelled counter-revolution, the right to vote and the so-called "formal equality" mean very little. Furthermore, the suppressed traditions, connected with the general duty of women to work resulted in women bearing a double burden. Women devoted even more time to matters of survival and turned even further into private life.

## Women as "revolutionary potential"

A feature of Socialism is also the fact that women are considered in the first place as "revolutionary potential", as "yeast". They are to "emancipate" themselves first of all as workers and pursue their rights only through their workplaces. Women's organizations and political associations of women are prohibited, since they "split the working class" and introduce "bourgeois feminism". It was for this reason that the only women's organization in postwar Yugoslavia (the semi-autonomous Anti-Fascist Women's League) was disbanded in 1953 — not because it had too much influence on women, but because in itself, as an organization defined as being "of women", it was a "danger" to social and political unity.

If it were possible to assess the situation of women according to how many of them are employed, Slovene women would be at the forefront. Almost every adult woman is employed. However a closer view reveals a less rosy situation.

- Some 70% of assembly-line workers are women;
- Women's incomes are some 25% below those of men whatever their level of education or training;
- Women perform some 26 hours of housework each week;
- They take very little part in political life. This is especially true at the higher levels where the most important decisions are taken: here there are almost no women (on average, under 10%);
- There are groups of women who suffer special discrimination, emigrant women from South Yugoslavia, or the so-called "non-Slovenes" of whom some have never finished primary school.

Although Slovenia in comparison with

the rest of Yugoslavia, or even with some West European states, has good legislation concerning women, there have been no progressive policies on women for years. Furthermore, many leaders of the CP and of the opposition have started over the past few years to talk about women exclusively in connection with the declining birth-rate. Most of the media have followed suit, getting people worked up about the "dying out" of the Slovene nation.

This has led to a situation in which for the first time there is a real national understanding amongst nearly all the forces involved in the struggle for power, to the effect that all insist that Slovenia has a pressing need for a "population policy".

In spite of the official "unacceptability" of "women's separatism" throughout Yugoslavia since the mid-1970s there have been an increasing number of feminist "explosions". In Zagreb since the mid-1970s there has existed a Women and Society Section that has introduced feminism on the academic level. There has also been a women's group in Belgrade, although it has only been active sporadically. However I think it would be true to say that Slovenia is one of the few socialist countries where feminist groups have appeared along with other opposition groups. Women's actions, to be sure, attracted public attention, but previously they also had a moral significance. But this only lasted up to the point where the national issue came to the forefront.

## Great Importance of existing women's groups

It has to be said that the women's groups formed after 1984 have not exactly drawn in vast numbers of women. Nonetheless their formation and their small actions are of great importance for the future.

They have achieved:

1. A real legalization of the idea of "feminism" which had previously been an insult. This is shown by the fact that the CP and also the Socialist League have "recognized" that feminism has played an important role in history.
2. The establishment — and the confession — of an understanding that Socialism has proved in no way superior to "other systems" as far as the position of women is concerned.

The high point of feminist activity until now came in 1985-87. The first organization to be founded was the Women's Group of the Slovene Sociological Society, followed by the Section and the *Lila-Klub* in the Students cultural centre, where a lesbian group was also set up later. Actions against the introduction of compulsory military service for women, together with the peace group, in 1986; a big demonstration against nuclear power in Ljubljana in 1987 (the year of Chernobyl); different women-only open events (which caused a sensation among public



"I've had enough!"

opinion); various theoretical discussions and publications about feminism; the first meeting of Yugoslav feminists since the war in 1987; and the Women's Helpline founded this year are only some of the — in my view very impressive — activities of the feminists of Slovenia.

Even so, it is today clear that the initiatives mentioned above have now fallen away — only the lesbian group and the helpline are still functioning. There are, of course, several reasons for this, but I see the chief reason as being that these groups were set up in a period when they appeared to be not only feminist initiatives but also as a part of a broader alternative society to that of the bureaucratic power monopoly.

### Women rejected by former allies

Feminism was, in this context, a form of struggle against Socialism, and feminists were at this time acceptable for oppositional groups which were in fact strongly traditionalist. But as soon — as in the case of the trial of Jansa and co.<sup>1</sup> — national feelings got the upper hand, women's groups were no longer acceptable as allies for many. And this is the direction in which things have continued. With the exception of the Greens and the previous (now independent) CP youth organization, the political organizations of the opposition are arguing ever more strongly that women should be pushed back into the kitchen. Paradoxically, the reformist currents in the CP and Socialist Union have taken on some feminist demands such as the demand for quotas in the Spring elections; a Women's List has even been created by the Socialist Union.

There are an increasing number of signs that the latest conflict between Serbia and Slovenia will lead to an increase in the polarization between the CP and the opposition. The conflict with Serbia is the only means that the CP has of gaining legitima-

cy, since it can present itself as democratic and generally acceptable only in comparison with the Serb party. The more severe this conflict becomes, the better can the Slovene CP hold onto power and demand support.

For the opposition this means that it has to be united for the elections if it is to have a chance. But this means abandoning all the pluralism that was fought for so hard. It is clear what this means for women. It is no accident that the most important questions on which there are differences of opinion among the recently formed opposition groups are precisely questions such as the population policy, abortion and part-time work.

### Different traditions and levels of development

The differences inside Yugoslavia are as big as the differences between North and South on a world scale. It is only in Croatia that the socio-economic situation of women is comparable with Slovenia. Different traditions and levels of development mould the differences between Kosovo, where the majority of women are Albanian, and Slovenia. Since Kosovo is symptomatic of the general political and social situation of Yugoslavia, I will briefly look at the situation in this so-called "autonomous region".

In 1986 in Kosovo only 5.5% of women were working outside the home. Serbian women (Serbs make up only 12% of the population) were proportionally over-represented. A very strong Islamic tradition and very strong laws governing morality affect the daily life of the Albanians. Demographers have claimed that the very high Albanian birthrate is the most important reason for the underdevelopment of Kosovo and Serb nationalism has scored its greatest successes by blowing this issue out of proportion. The birthrate has been presented as a threat to the Serb nation and a weapon of counter-

revolution and separatism.

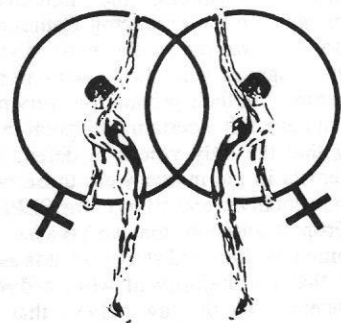
Women — not only Albanian, but also Serb and Montenegrin women — become in this way a lever for Serb policy. An example of this is the way in which the question of rape has been presented in Kosovo not as an issue involving all women to the same extent but as a national issue. In Autumn 1987 Serb and Montenegrin women demonstrated because, allegedly, the Albanians were the main perpetrators of rape in Kosovo. (This was the first of the big Serb-Montenegrin demonstrations!)

### Double punishment for "nationalist" rape

Not once was it mentioned that in Serbia rape is not a crime within marriage and it was also forgotten that in the Serbian legal code rape is defined twice: according to the second definition, rape is a national offense, and the punishment for a "nationalist" rape is on average twice as high as for "usual" rape.

This background explains the theories that see in family and social policy a means for correcting the birth rate upwards or downwards. The idea that lies behind such theories is that in Yugoslavia there are too many Albanians, too few Slovenes or Serbs and so on. And it is clear with all these theories that, whatever the "level of democratization" in the republic in question, women are viewed solely as a means to an end.

In conclusion, we can say that Yugoslav women, with the worsening economic situation, are getting ever poorer and ever more burdened and have ever less to do with politics. It is as yet not possible to say if and how they will become critical of the present national policies. When the free elections take place this year in Slovenia we will see whether women are going to support a national policy that intends to introduce so-called reforms at their expense. ★



1. Ivan Jansa was a journalist arrested along with others, including an army NCO, in June 1988, for "possessing military secrets". Jansa had written articles criticizing the Yugoslav military. A massive campaign for their release ensued in Slovenia (See IV 147).

# Church, State and women's right to abortion

LAST JUNE, a little before the elections which led to the fall of the PZPR (Communist Party) government, a team of experts of the Polish episcopate, supported by 76 deputies of the Polish parliament — 68 of them men — introduced a bill "in defence of the unborn child" through the vote of a deputy of the PZKS (Polish Social Catholic Union). This proposed the abolition of the 1956 law and the pure and simple banning of abortion, with a three year prison sentence for any woman or doctor infringing the law. Reaction to this was swift. For the first time since the establishment of the People's Republic of Poland, Polish women came onto the streets to defend what they considered as a right, against all those who intended to deny it them.

JAQUELINE HEINEN

IN THE DEBATE which has taken place throughout the media, the most extreme points of view have been expressed. While the Catholic press hailed the bill, expressing hope "that the era of infanticide is finally over", newspapers linked to the PZPR reacted with headlines like "No to pressure", "Perhaps women could be asked their opinion?", and "We want to decide ourselves".

As to the representatives of Solidarnosc, after an initial declaration of Walesa saying "something must be done to stop people killing one another", they sought above all to dodge the debate "so as not to make it a political issue in the elections"<sup>1</sup>. Among the innumerable women — often practicing Catholics — who have written to the newspapers to protest against what they saw as an interference with their private life, very many must have felt a certain confusion in noting that the only voices to defend their interests in the matter were those of the representatives and allies of the PZPR.

From discussions that we have had with women workers and students<sup>2</sup>, it is apparent that the majority of women directly concerned by the law believe that they should have the right to decide. However, they consider that abortion is an extreme solution, and the majority rule it out for themselves. Yet the abortion rate is very much higher in Poland than elsewhere. How can the contradictions between declarations of intention and reality be interpreted? What motivates these women

who, de facto, more frequently have recourse to abortion than to efficient contraception to avoid an unwanted pregnancy?

"Do you want an abortion?" a gynecologist asks a pregnant woman who has come to consult him, before even knowing the reason for her visit. This is not an anecdote circulated by the bigots, but a true story told by women favourable to abortion rights — and who, in this case, had no intention of having an abortion. It illustrates well the manner in which abortion, far from being seen as a last recourse, serves as simply another means of contraception — and is regarded as such not only by women, but by a part of the medical profession.

Whereas estimates on the number of abortions prior to the adoption of the law run between 400 and 500,000 a year, the official figures put the annual number at around 140 to 160,000 until the beginning of the 1980s and claim the figure has fallen since then. But these figures have little to do with reality, and besides it is easier for the authorities to "err" when only a limited proportion of abortions — those carried out in hospitals and medical offices — are officially registered. For their part, the majority of private gynecologists avoid declaring them for tax reasons. Moreover, given the moral pressure exercised by church and society, most women prefer to see private practitioners to ensure the secret is kept — whatever the price it costs them (50 to 100% of an average monthly salary).

This tendency has grown stronger in recent years, with the degradation of reception conditions in the hospitals. This explains the gap between the official statistics and the estimates of specialists of between 500,000 and 700,000 abortions annually over the past 15 years. In other words, the estimate is of almost as many interruptions of pregnancy as of births each year (587,700 births in 1988).

But it would be wrong to stress the question of quantity without mentioning the problem of quality. If women prefer to visit private doctors, it is not solely because of a concern for privacy. It is also because they have no desire to find themselves dumped in a corridor, with a doctor who does not hide his displeasure at having to put off a delicate obstetrical operation to give priority to a pregnant patient who cannot wait any longer for an abortion. Right or wrong, most of the women interviewed feel a private consultancy to be more medically reliable than a hospital, even in the case of complications. "My private doctor has given me a telephone number where I can contact him at any time, whereas everyone knows well what happens to those who are abandoned for hours in their corner of the hospital, with nobody to look after them", said one worker from a Lodz enterprise.

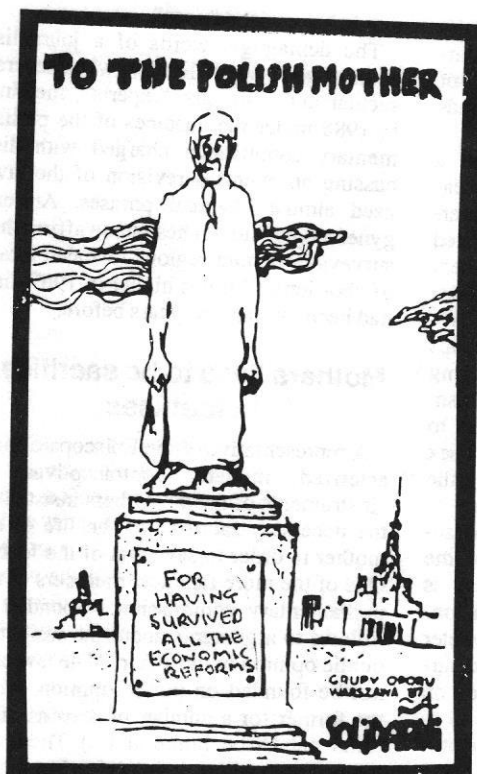
## Doctors lack necessary materials

In hospital, as in the private consultancies, interruptions of pregnancy generally take the form of dilation and curettage (usually in the eleventh or twelfth week), the suction method being hardly ever used. Doctors are familiar enough with the latter method. But they lack adequate materials, as with the head of the clinic at Cracow, or are sceptical about the efficiency of the method, as with one practitioner from Lodz (who did not specify on what experience she based her assessment). As for the women, they have for the most part never heard of the method. "Me, I know vaguely what it is because I have read something about it in a detective novel in English" said one of them. When doctors are asked if women are informed of the consequences of an abortion in the twelfth week rather than the sixth or seventh, it is not uncommon to hear the reply that this aspect of the question does not concern them and that there are advisory services for that purpose. Hardly surprising, then, if the proportion of side-effects due to abortions is particularly high in Poland. Here again, there are no reliable figures. The Church brandishes the figure of 50% of cases of sterility, of premature births, of miscarriage, and so

1. For the political context in which this debate took place, see *IV* 165, June 12, 1989.

2. Survey carried out from August to October 1989 in the context of an assignment of the CNRS, jointly with Anna Matuchniak, member of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Lodz.





on amongst women who have terminated their first pregnancy, without ever citing its sources. Numerous doctors repeat these figures without batting an eyelid. Yet nobody poses seriously the problem of what measures to take to resolve this situation.

To pose the problem of abortion is also to pose the problem of contraception. In this respect also the situation is by no means rosy. Not only are the majority of modern contraceptives insufficiently available, but the quality of the few products available leaves much to be desired, without mentioning the total absence of education on the subject in schools.

After a professor of obstetrics from Nowa Huta<sup>3</sup> had solemnly told us that it was possible to find all the contraceptives you needed in the chemists and that his town had a multiplicity of advisory services where women could go to consult without queuing, we decided to see for ourselves. Result; two of the three advisory services in the area we visited were closed through lack of personnel, and in the third, the queue which had formed would have meant several hours of waiting for the later arrivals.

Moreover, one alone of the chemists visited had in stock an IUD of Polish make (in one size, for women having already had at least two children) — the same make as that which a Warsaw gynecologist had told us he had stopped prescribing for his patients, given the frequency of the complications resulting from its use. For the rest — nothing. No pill, no condom, no diaphragm, no pessary, nothing...The same experience repeated itself in Cracow and Lodz. In Warsaw, one single chemist in the whole

of the town had the pill in stock. But the make varied from one week to the other. "How can I prescribe one type of pill to a patient when I know she will be unable to get it two times in succession?" Moreover, neither the minipill nor the "morning after" pill are available, and the pills of Polish make are little used by women, because they are very high in hormones.

The sole place where it is possible to procure contraceptives of good quality (of foreign manufacture) with some regularity is at Pewex<sup>4</sup>, in exchange for dollars. Even there the choice is limited to pills and IUDs (the latter costing around half of an average salary). For the youth or for adults who only have sexual relations very irregularly, the situation is one of absolute misery. Spermicides have acquired a certain popularity, but the contract of importation for the Yugoslav product which could still be found two years ago has been stopped under the pretext that a Polish doctor was ready to produce another...which has

still not appeared. Sometimes it is possible to find condoms in the "Ruch" kiosks but an IIPF inquiry has shown that their quality left much to be desired — whereas the western, and even Chinese or Korean, products are resistant to 1.5 liters of water, the limit for the Polish product is 300 milliliters...Hardly astonishing then that Poland is one of the countries where people have recourse to the least effective methods of prevention, despite the growing proportion of couples (more than 80%) who say they are convinced of the usefulness of contraception. In 1977 a comprehensive survey by GUS indicated that more than 70% of Polish couples used exclusively so-called "natural methods" sanctioned by the Church (rhythm method, temperature) and to coitus interruptus, whereas the proportion of women using the pill and the IUD was respectively 7% and 1.6%. Recently, the recourse to "natural methods" seems even to have increased amongst young couples, because of the aggressive campaigns of the Church. However, the role of Catholic propaganda is not the sole explanation in this instance. It is, on the contrary, in the combined action of Church and State that the origin of the present situation can be located.

"It would be correct to say that the development of the government's information policy as well as the educational measures in the matter of family planning and birth control in the course of the last 15 years have led straight to ignorance"<sup>5</sup>

This judgment of a very critical demographer, attacking the hypocrisy of the state bases itself on observation of the regression which has taken place in this respect in the policy of the Polish regime.

In the 1950s and 60s efforts were made to improve information on the existing contraceptives and their diffusion, to publish education brochures for adolescents, whilst at the same time the Society for Planned Pregnancy was created — which subsequently became the Society for Family Development (TRR).

But from the end of the 1970s, this activity ceased almost completely. The TRR had only 12 consultation centres in the whole country and enjoyed very limited financial aid. Government censorship even attacked its publications, which were deemed "immoral" and "obscene".

### Catholics and Communists agree on sexuality

Mikolaj Kozakiewicz, one of the leading figures of the TRR, emphasizes for his part that puritanism was a constant trait of Polish Communism and "that its partisans were in every way comparable to those of the Church in their position on matters of sexuality, even if they were diametrically opposed to them in other areas"<sup>6</sup> A recent example of this was the pulping in 1987 of a sex education manual — the first of its kind for decades — aimed at students of 17-18 years old. After 500,000 copies had been printed, it was promptly withdrawn from circulation under the pressure of Catholic circles, horrified by the presence of two (very chaste) drawings showing two adolescents making love. To this day, the Ministry of Education still has no plans to produce another.

Enabling individuals to become conscious of their sexuality and to control it has always been the last concern of the successive teams of bureaucrats in power. Not only have the contraceptives introduced with powerful propaganda in the 1950s been long superseded, but since the end of the 1960s, the production of diaphragms and spermicides has been cut by almost 90%, that of condoms by 50%, the IUDs introduced in 1970 are eight times less numerous today, and the pill is produced in the same quantities as ten years ago...As for the plans for the training of nurses, psychologists and social workers in the field of sex education and contraception, they have never been applied. In a big state hospital in Nowa Huta, there are on the contrary posters covered with slogans against abortion and photos of bloody foetuses, which we found in the corridors of the gynecology department. The only one which spoke of contracep-

3. A working class town linked to the steel complex located near Cracow.

4. Shops created to make up for the shortcomings of the official system, where luxury articles, and all sorts of basic necessities which cannot be found on the market, are sold.

5. Mark Okolski, "Abortion and Contraception in Poland", in "Studies in Family Planning", no. 11, 1983, p. 268.

6. "Histoire et politique des lois sur le planning familial en Pologne" in "Le planning familial en Europe — la dimension des droits humains", IPPF, Paris 1985, p. 172.

tion advocated "natural" methods.

The state bears then a very heavy responsibility for the situation created in the field of abortion and contraception; "When the government neglects family planning and there is an acute shortage of contraceptives, efficient methods are rarely used, even in social groups enjoying a high standard of living. In such conditions, the more a woman is educated, the more she tries to avoid an unwanted child, and the more she will have recourse to the only available method of birth control — abortion".<sup>7</sup>

In fact, it was solely demographic preoccupations which led the Polish state to care about family planning. In this sense, the accusations of the Church that the Communists only adopted the 1956 law and its 1959 amendments for this reason are well founded. Following the anti-nationalist policy of Gomułka, it was the demographers who relaunched the debate on abortion at the end of the 1960s, using alarmist language on the lowering of the birth rate and the aging of the population. When Gierek acceded to power with the covert support of the Church in 1970, it implemented an accelerated economic development programme that entailed a policy encouraging more births and the eulogizing of large families.

### Jaruzelski government discourages high birth-rate

The media as much as the Church then presented mothers of eight and of twelve children as "heroic mothers"...and this course persisted until the end of the 1970s. On the other hand, when the ascendant demographic wave of 1982-83 began to worry the Jaruzelski government, the latter adopted a policy of discouraging high birth rates (reflected by, amongst other things, the granting of new subsidies to the TRR). The contempt for the interests of women evident in these successive and contradictory "policies" was reflected in the paternalism of a PZPR deputy (a doctor), a member of Parliament elected in June 1989 who presented himself to us as a "defender of women". Certainly, he was opposed to the Church's proposed legislation, but his principal worry was that all this should not make waves; "We must avoid all this noise, these demonstrations...it is necessary to let the parliamentarians handle this affair. The discussion must take place calmly, among specialists...". In other words, among men (women represent only 8% of deputies) and on this point, the priests would not contradict them!

For a long time, it is above all at the level of the parishes that the anti-abortion activity of the Catholic church has been centred (in the Sunday sermons, in the obligatory courses of preparation for marriage, and so on). The campaign speeded up in 1980-81, through a press campaign, launching a great offensive on the theme

of the right to life and the abolition of the 1956 law. Certain groups within Solidarnosc, like that of the Szczecin Academy of Medicine, adopted platforms of demands around these themes.

The December 13 coup d'état put a brake on this campaign, without noticeably diminishing the activities of the several anti-abortion groups which existed already or have developed since then, such as "The Protection of the Unborn Child", "Gaudium Vitae", "SOS Family", "Yes to Life" and so on. These groups intervene at a number of levels, ranging from "distress telephones" to proselytism in the hospitals, passing through aid to single mothers and battered women, "sex education" courses for young couples, the publication of brochures on the use of "natural" methods, on the sacred character of marriage, and so on. One of the characteristics of the situation today is that the initiative in the field of birth control falls to the Church to a much greater extent than the state. All the Catholic parishes advertise the times of courses on "preparing to live as a couple" (as well as the inevitable "exhibition" of photo-horrors on abortion), whereas the state institutions are silent on the question. One of the women staffing a "distress telephone" (the number of which was prominently displayed at the entrance to every Lodz hospital as well as on the bus shelters and other public places) explained to us that she had 204 "little children" to her credit — in other words, the babies (most often those born to single mothers) that she had "saved" from abortion thanks to her powers of conviction.

### Nurses inform anti-abortion activists

Another, who insisted on the "non-violent" action of her group ("Gaudium Vitae"), told us that one of her activities consisted of contacting pregnant women the day they came to hospital for an abortion (thanks to the nurses who informed her!) and showing them photos of "murdered" fetuses to encourage them to keep their baby... As to the content of the argument employed, it can easily be imagined.

For some decades, the Church played on the argument of the declining birth rate. In the course of the last decade, it has extended this theme and hardened its tone, and quotations like the following can now be found in the Catholic press; "If the very conservative figure of 500,000 abortions a year on average is accepted, this means that, in the 32 years that the law has been in force, Poland has lost 16 million children! The essential question from this is the following; is this simply infanticide or should it not rather be seen as genocide? (...) Hitler has been dead a long time now, but we, thanks to this "progressive" and "humanitarian" law, are advancing along the road that he

would have wished us to".

The demagogic words of a journalist short of good copy? Hardly, when several secular and religious "experts", meeting in 1988 under the auspices of the parliamentary commission charged with discussing an eventual revision of the law, used almost identical phrases. An ex-gynecologist did not hesitate to affirm that surveys in certain regions revealed a rate of abortions 17 times higher in 1967 than had been the case ten years before.

### Mothers lives to be sacrificed to fetuses

A representative of the Episcopate characterized modern contraceptives as "instruments of death". Others insisted on the necessary sacrifice of the life of the mother in order to save that of the foetus. One of the more fanatical members of the parliamentary commission responded as follows to arguments about the weight of public opinion in the affair; "The law cannot be founded on public opinion, when the former for a number of reasons often turns out to be immoral (...) There are many areas where it is preferable not to ask the opinion of the society".

We found all these arguments in the interviews we conducted with representatives of Church circles or militants of the "pro-life" movement, who were prepared to employ an eclectic range of justifications for their position — the "non-ecological" (sic) character of abortion is very much in fashion in the polemic developed by the protectors of the rights of the foetus.

As to the social and economic effects of unwanted pregnancies, that is not their problem. Even women pregnant with a child known to be disabled or abnormal have no excuse in their eyes, for "human life is a supreme good". Their intransigence in relation to contraception is as firm as that in relation to abortion. If some have reservations about the position of the Church prohibiting all "non-natural" contraception, very many among them share the point of view expressed by a priest on television, who proposed the banning of the sale of IUDs, "when they have an abortive effect".<sup>8</sup>

When we emphasized to our interviewees that living conditions (housing in particular) are a decisive factor in the decisions taken by women — even religious women — on whether or not to have a child, they dismissed the argument contemptuously. "Women who are not in agreement with the Church are not Catholics". And the supreme argument; "If they don't want their child, they have only to give it away or put it in a children's home!". Without dwelling on the con-

7. Marek Okolski, op. cit. p. 273.

8. He did not respond clearly to the question posed by a feminist who asked him if his proposition also envisaged the jailing for three years of women using the IUD.

tempt such phrases imply for women who are regarded simply as wombs, this response appears all the more scandalous in the context of the enormous obstacles put to adoption in Poland, and bearing in mind the conditions which we had witnessed in the childrens' homes, overcrowded, with underpaid personnel working in conditions of extreme privation. As to the problem of non-Catholic women unconvinced by a morality to which they do not adhere, the response was simple and "naïve"; "But the position of the Church is just and good for everybody, since it is moral!". Confronted with this discourse, the representatives of the PZPR and the secular organizations supposedly defending the right to abortion adopt, it must be said, an all the more defensive attitude, and it is not to them that women can look for a genuine defence of their interests.

The hundreds, and then the thousands of women who demonstrated in the street, when the anti-abortion legislation was announced, the success of the picket organized by feminists and the League of Women in front of Parliament are a sign that something extremely important is happening in Poland. A beginning of an upheaval which was not expected, which has led women, for the first time, to firmly say no to a policy made in their name that takes no account of their aspirations. This is not to overestimate the breadth of a movement which is only in its infancy and which will meet all the more obstacles in its development inasmuch as young women workers show very clear tendencies of withdrawing into the world of the family<sup>9</sup>. But this reaction nonetheless bears witness to the beginning of a raising of consciousness in relation to the contradiction which Polish women find themselves placed in, being expected at the same time to "work like a man" and take care of almost all household tasks and the education of children in a situation of unprecedented economic crisis.

In themselves, the very partial surveys made in the Spring of 1989 have nothing cheerful about them. They indicate a clearly more backward attitude amongst adolescents (only 20% for the right to abortion) than amongst adults (53%), undoubtedly due to the direct influence of the proselytism of the Church among the younger generation. The gap is deepening particularly between younger and older women. The attitudes of students have

more in common with the latter — without doubt because very many of them have already experienced maternity and the everyday problems it brings. For our part, and contrary to our discussions in Church circles or with the intelligentsia, we did not meet a single woman amongst the 30 women workers we interviewed in the enterprises who was favourable to the Church-sponsored legislation. Like the letters published in the newspapers (perhaps arbitrarily selected by editorial boards more or less linked to the PZPR), they are for the most part scandalized at the idea that they could be imprisoned for having an abortion. Most often, they demand the right — for their sister, their colleague or their neighbor if not for themselves — to decide on the matter (on this, the men are clearly more nuanced).



To the question of whether the Church appears to them to have a decisive influence in the behaviour of women in the matter of contraception and abortion, by far the most frequent reply is; no.

In justifying an act which they say they would otherwise condemn, they speak of the difficulties of everyday life; "One child more, how is it possible, with these prices, these hours spent in the queues!". They evoke above all the problems of housing; "I don't know how my daughters are going to find anywhere to stay, if their right to have an abortion were taken away...". The state "which does nothing in the area of contraception" is abundantly criticized, as are the doctors, "who don't tell us, who suggest nothing", and who "demand payment even when they don't carry out the abortion themselves, so that you can have a hospital bed". More than one attacks the priests "who have no idea of what it means to support a family in today's conditions", who usually have a maid to manage their household, "who have money, cars and apartments all for themselves". Nearly all declared themselves convinced that an increase in the availability of contraception would diminish the rate of abortions.

Yet these are the same women who, when asked if they use modern contraceptives, reply "no, because in my case it isn't necessary". What do they mean by this? That their husband "knows how to control himself or that they manage with the rhythm method. Have they had abortions? Yes, in more than 50% of cases, and often several times... Some say that they prefer "to sin once and have an abortion rather than to sin all the time and use contraceptives". But very many are simply not conscious of the contradictions they express. Rare are those who explicitly relate their practices to the material shortages in the domain of contraception. This indicates the depth of the influence of the retrogressive ideas diffused by the Church... It indicates also how much remains hidden of the violence they exert against themselves by so frequently having recourse to abortion.

Evidently, the absence until then of any autonomous womens' movement in the political field counts for very much in the situation described. The League of Women, affiliated to the PZPR, certainly reacted at the time when the bill was introduced and organized the sending of petitions to parliament; but it acted late, following pro-

tests from its rank and file members. Without being as discredited as the party, it is not for all that a credible organization. That is why a lot will depend on the little feminist groups which began to organize at the time of the Spring demonstrations. Some of them have been interviewed by the press and have appeared in debates on the television. Last October, they officially created the Polish Feminist Association, and, at the request of NOW (the American feminist organization), organized on November 12 of last year an action in support of American women who demonstrated on that day against threats to abortion rights in the USA.

These first steps need to be supported, for the capacity of this movement to take off will depend in part on the solidarity it receives from feminist groups in other countries. ★

**THE Polish Feminist Association can be contacted at; Polskie Stowarzyszenie Feministyczne, c/o Bożena Uminska, ul. Mickiewicza 23 m. 39, Warsaw.**

9. On this, see Jacqueline Heinen, "Femmes en reserve. Les travailleuses polonaises entre la famille et l'emploi", IRESCO, Paris 1989.

# Challenging sexual exploitation

THE interview that follows first appeared in the September/October number of *Work in Progress*, an independent journal of the South African labour movement.

**Y**OUR union posed two of the most controversial resolutions to Cosatu congress. What practical experiences prompted them? And to what extent did men in your union participate in drawing them up?

Over the years there have been many complaints about sexual harassment and exploitation of women members by management and particularly middle management such as foremen. An example is women giving sexual favours for jobs. There have been extensive discussions, many struggles and much publicity around this issue.

What became clear to us was that it is all very well discussing the issue when it manifests itself with management, but sexual exploitation was taking place within our own union structures. This was particularly apparent in relation to young male organizers and newly recruited young female members.

Complaints began to filter up through the ranks of Cosatu unions. It was mentioned at the Cosatu national women's conference last year, and again at the March 1989 national seminar. We heard the same complaints in our own union.

This was clearly a question of power relations. Union officials and shop stewards, well entrenched and secure in their positions, were often getting involved with more than one new young woman at a time. The women were inexperienced and felt afraid of exposing the issue.

Some of our male office bearers began to identify this problem. They had noticed a more general problem both in Cosatu and TGWU — women members get involved and then drop out of organization. We felt one of the reasons was sexual exploitation. So the congress resolutions arose out of the experiences of our rank-and-file. They should in no way be seen as an attack on male leaders.

In TGWU the issue was broadly discussed in union structures. Although we see the importance of separate women's structures, it is important that the rest of the union's structures are discussing issues around women.

THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) constitutional guidelines state that a post-apartheid government will have to take affirmative action to eliminate inequalities and discrimination between men and women. Is this being taken seriously by the trade union movement, which represents a large number of exploited, oppressed women workers? While women's committees and structures are emerging in most COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) unions those involved acknowledge that there is a difficult struggle ahead — that it will take far more than token women representatives in organizations and government to solve the problems.

At the recent COSATU Congress in July, the Transport and General Workers Union — which has a majority of male members — tabled two of the most controversial resolutions of the congress: one on sexual conduct and another on women leadership.

The first called for "tighter sexual discipline" within COSATU and its affiliates to counter the detrimental effect on the organization of male comrades engaging in "unequal relationships" with newly recruited women members.

The second urged that a conscious effort be made to ensure that women were elected to leadership positions at all levels of COSATU and its affiliates and that practical barriers to their participation should be tackled.

One third of TGWU's 26,000 strong membership comprises women — who work mainly as cleaners.

At the congress the debate raged for four hours, revealing many opinions and positions. TGWU's reports in recent years show that the resolutions arose out of extensive discussion among its members. Most importantly, worker representatives recognized that the lack of women leadership in the union movement is directly linked to issues of sexual oppression and harassment.

Women's active participation in the union is not only hampered by the lack of childcare facilities or heavy household responsibilities. Women also face "wrong approaches by male shop stewards and organizers, ridicule of women's issues" and sexual exploitation by more senior male union members. INGRID OBERY spoke to TGWU general secretary JANE BARRETT about the congress resolutions and the issues they raised.

In mid-1988 our NEC spent a full day discussing issues of concern to women in the unions including the issue of sexual exploitation.

The congress resolutions were prepared by a national sub-committee which did not have a majority of women by any means. And not long before the congress TGWU's national women's committee met for the first time. It endorsed the resolutions and prepared motivations. These were presented to the congress by our senior male leadership. This was not because women members did not want to speak to the resolution on women's leadership. But the delegation felt that generally people expect women to motivate "women's issues" and it was important to get the congress to understand that this was not an issue which was just a complaint from women but was a serious political problem — a problem which both the men and women in TGWU took seriously.

TGWU's concern with the issues of sexual conduct and women in leadership can be traced back firstly to the Cosatu resolution of 1985 which resolved to fight all discriminatory treatment of women at work, in society and in the federation. Secondly, TGWU resolutions at its 1987 and 1988 congresses resolved to fight sexual harassment "wherever it happens" and to "review all our customs so as to advance our struggle". Thirdly, TGWU's recent NEC meeting spent a day discussing the ANC's constitutional guidelines, including points about the ANC's recommendation for affirmative action.

In preparing for congress we discussed the new Cosatu leadership and whether there were any women candidates. Very few names were thought of. And this highlighted the lack of women leadership at all levels in the unions, so that inevitably Cosatu's leadership would be all-male.

■ What was the reaction of the

**TGWU membership to the Congress's negative response to these resolutions? Will the union be taking resolutions back to the next congress?**

We do not view the congress responses as negative. It was no surprise that there was not overwhelming support for the resolutions. And we were aware that positions taken in our union may not necessarily be shared by members of other unions — particularly those with a majority of male membership who have never really had to face these issues. But the issue got debated and that was positive. Initially FAWU [Food and Allied Workers Union] seconded our sexual conduct motion, but then withdrew. In the end only CWIU [Chemical Workers Industrial Union] pledged full support.

We have no doubt that the next few years will see a shift in consciousness among the unions. We will monitor this carefully, and if we feel there is no significant change then we will bring these issues to the next congress.

During the four-hour debate NUM [National Union of Mineworkers] put forward an amendment which dealt with what they termed working class morality. We viewed this as a counter motion to our sexual conduct resolution. What working class morality involves was unclear. But in NUM's motion it was argued that because we live in a bourgeois society, workers have bourgeois morality imposed upon them. This morality is one of the capitalist bosses and it leads workers astray. NUM argued that workers must go back to their roots, reject bourgeois morality and develop working class morality. What this involves was not specified.

TGWU felt this did not accommodate the specific points around sexual conduct which we wanted emphasized. We looked seriously at their resolution, but there was no way to combine theirs and ours.

Even before the motion went to congress, some unions suggested that we take the resolution off the table and refer it to smaller sub-committees. These unions felt we would lose a showdown on the issue. But TGWU members felt that even if the majority at the congress disagreed with the motion, what was important was the opportunity to give this serious problem expression in a forum of more than two thousand people.

A number of positions were argued. Some delegates said that there was no such thing as sexual exploitation — that women asked for it and that women can say no. Others argued that it was a problem of discipline, but it did not warrant debate at national congress.

And yet other delegates said we need to educate our members first and that it should not be isolated from other discipline related problems.

Ultimately there was a decision, in accordance with a proposal from another union, that the issue of sexual conduct be incorporated into a discussion around a general code of conduct.

**■ Would linking the issue of sexual conduct to other issues of discipline not take it out of the realm of being a "women's issue" and take it into the realm of being a union issue? Isn't this desirable?**

We felt it was a specific issue which merited special attention. The delegation did not accept that it should be shifted into the discussion of a code of conduct. But at that stage it was clear we would have to compromise. The alternative was going to a vote — which many of our delegation were not keen to do. But in the interests of reaching resolution of the debate we accepted the proposal.

Members were disappointed, particularly shop stewards. But all were galvanized to promote our position and put the resolutions into effect through whatever means possible.

**■ There are varied initiatives within Cosatu unions around the organization and mobilization of women. What is happening in TGWU and how do you relate to initiatives in other unions?**

TGWU has set up a national women's committee with representatives from each branch. The first meeting identified a few issues to be used as a catalyst for mobilizing women members. We have also encouraged branches to have women's meetings. Women were keen, but were finding it difficult to isolate concrete issues of interest. The national meeting suggested cervical cancer and pap smears

as a starting point. This was an issue which concerned all women, and we also had access to resources — health groups who were willing to provide education and information. Also, there are very simple demands which can be attached to the issue.

Hopefully the structures will begin to generate their own local issues.

Like other Cosatu unions, over the past few years we have succeeded in getting to a stage where shop stewards don't think twice about including certain issues in collective bargaining demands — most notably maternity rights. Just two years ago this would have been an afterthought.

We have made some progress on maternity rights — most importantly the right to job security, in a few cases some payment over the leave period and the right for time off for ante-natal classes.

**■ There has been a debate about whether Cosatu should have internal women's structures, or whether women workers should only participate in women's organizations in the community. Can you detail some positions in this debate?**

Whatever the debate, structures are developing in the unions. The question of a women's structure in Cosatu was hotly debated at its women's conference last year. At the time only NUMSA [Metalworkers union] had a functioning national women's structure. This made it very difficult to practically present the advantages of having an internal structure.

The debate is not resolved, but over the past year a much more common understanding has developed: that it is useful for women to come together, not just as individuals, but as representatives of women in their union structures, to discuss issues





of national importance to women in unions.

At the Cosatu congress this year, delegates agreed a national committee of women representatives would be formed to discuss the revival of the national women's organization, Fedstaw.

This too represents progress. The resolution acknowledges the importance of women discussing the issue on behalf of a constituency, to whom they have a responsibility to report back. Hopefully the committee will generate a more long-standing commitment to come together to discuss other issues of importance to women union members — these could be issues of political importance or bread and butter issues.

At the time of the Cosatu women's conference some people feared that national Cosatu structure would merely duplicate existing community structures and draw women away from them. Those in favour of a Cosatu structure agreed that the union structure should never be a substitute for community women's organizations, but still felt that there was merit in drawing union women together to talk about problems they faced as workers and union members.

Unfortunately the divisions coincided with a range of other political divisions. Things have changed since then and there is openness to resolve the issue.

When the issue gets re-negotiated, hopefully internal union structures will be in a better position to demonstrate what role they play for women union members.

**■ In your experience, if women have participated in women's organizations or women's structures, does this provide them with a good basis for active and equal participation with men in other union structures and activities? Or do women tend to want to remain in "women's only"**

**structures?**

Separate women's structures are important. They provide a forum where women can learn to articulate their own point of view. Often women feel more free to talk (among themselves) and these structures mean many more women can take part in discussions — since so few occupy positions in other union structures.

But this does not mean women's issues must be relegated to those structures. Whatever is discussed in the women's committees must be integrated into general union structures — and not just in the form of a report-back.

The members of other unions structures must fully confront these issues.

It is also important not to overload the women's structures, so that those involved become reluctant to participate in other union structures because of lack of time.

**■ Have there been any responses from men to the issues brought from women's structures for debate in general union forums? Is there any sense that they feel these issues have already been dealt with in the women's structures and therefore do not need to be discussed again?**

Our structures are still embryonic, so this has not been tested at branch level. But at national level, the NEC became very enthusiastic during the day-long discussion of women's issues. There is every indication that more and more members — both men and women — are viewing issues traditionally seen as "women's issues" as important.

**■ There has been a lot of talk over the years about the need for housework and childcare to be shared so that women have the space to participate in union activities. How much has this remained at the level of talk, and how much has really filtered down to change men and women workers' attitudes to traditional gender roles? For example if housework is being shared, is it shared with other women family members or with male family members?**

This is very difficult to answer. But there have definitely been some shifts. Five years ago men would have been totally outraged at the suggestion of shared housework. Now there is a sense that men are far more involved with their children.

At the level of talk there is a lot more

acceptance of the concept of sharing housework. But those of our women members who do take on some leadership positions complain that no one shares their load at home.

**■ Women in unions have become more aware and conscious of issues which affect them specifically. Have they not been able to extend this consciousness to unorganized and unemployed women in their communities?**

The positive effect of organizing women around specific women's issues in the unions has enabled them to identify what affects them specifically as women in the community. Many women active in union structures — both women's and general structures — have become important in local community organizations. Their experience may help to transcend the notion of seeing women as "mothers" and to try and identify what it is that makes them a particular category of people in the community with a specific set of problems — just as for instance students have their own problems and issues.

**■ Do you think there is a resonance among community women who are not organized in any other forum, of their position in society as people and participants in their own right, rather than just as "mothers"?**

This is not an easy shift and will take a long time. And it depends on the extent to which women begin to actively participate in organizations. We have noticed, for example, that youth organizations are becoming increasingly male dominated. In some areas women are completely absent. And if some women are recruited they are treated as honorary men rather than women comrades representing a big constituency.

**■ Do you think that women's lack of participation in union leadership has affected their ability to organize effectively in their community and home environments?**

The fact that women in leadership are still the exception rather than the rule and the lack of experience of large numbers of women in key positions, have inhibited their ability to take the lead outside of the union. Their experience in the union does allow them to give input to their community organizations, but they still tend not to play leadership roles. Those women who are involved in union leadership are often so tied up with responsibilities that they have no time to participate in structures outside of the union. And there are not sufficient numbers of women in middle-level union leadership — like shop stewards — who could be leading community activists as well. It is most often male shop stewards who play this kind of dual role. ★

# Will Yugoslavia disintegrate?

**O**N WEDNESDAY January 24, some 30,000 demonstrators gathered in front of the Committee building of the League of Communists (LCY) in Kosovo's capital, Pristina. They demanded an end to the state of emergency, an amnesty for political prisoners, the introduction of a multiparty system, free elections and the resignation of Rahman Morina, the discredited leader of the League in the province. The police used tear gas and truncheons and 16 demonstrators were arrested. The League's leadership denounced the "counter-revolution" and a separatist "Slovene-Albanian plot" orchestrated from Albania, and reaffirmed that Kosovo was a part of the Serb republic.

The next day, a general strike broke out in more than 40 towns and villages in Kosovo. Some 30 factories stopped work, and shops stayed closed. Students boycotted lessons and university canteens. The demonstrators shouted slogans considered "hostile" by the police; "liberty and equality"; "free Adam Demagi"<sup>1</sup>.

## Many dead and wounded in Kosovo

The demonstrations continued on Saturday and Sunday. The worst events took place in Pec and Orahovac where the police opened fire on the crowd — there were six dead and more than 100 wounded. The number of those arrested remains unknown. The following week, more than 200,000 Albanians came out in the streets and this will not be the end.

Local clashes between the police and the Albanians have been taking place almost daily. At a primary school in Pristina, the police handcuffed and maltreated children who had protested against the sacking of three Albanian teachers. At Pec the Ramiz Sadiku enterprise was shut on the pretext of bankruptcy and 6,000 Albanians found themselves jobless. The enterprise has for a long time been a thorn in the side of the Serbs, who considered it a "nest of separatists." The assembly of the workers in front of the enterprise to protest against the sackings coincided with the opening of the Congress of the Serbian League of Communists, and this led to the gathering being characterized as showing disapproval of Serb policy and, of course, led to numerous arrests.

According to the Slovene weekly, *Mladina*, 39 people have been killed since the

**THE YUGOSLAV press agency, Tanjug, was the first to give information about the insurrectional events in Albania. According to Tanjug, these clashes between the Albanian police and demonstrators were bloody and followed by persecution.**

**To become the "media godfather" of the eventual liberation of the Albanian people is of great use to the Yugoslav regime as a means of refurbishing its image; it enables them to overlook recent events in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo, which has an Albanian majority.**

NINA JERKIC and JEAN ZINDEL



start of the state of emergency in February 1989, including children. According to an official report, all were counter-revolutionaries. On the other hand, the report says nothing about those kept in "isolation". One would have liked to know more about the conditions in which the "isolated" cases are held, without formal charges, without a time limit and without any right to a defence. This method has been in use for a long time in Kosovo to silence intellectuals, journalists, students and so on. *Mladina* estimates their number at 300.

The trial of Azem Vlasi (the ex-head of the Kosovo LCY) continues, in the absence of journalists, because "the room is too small". Azem Vlasi and 14 others are accused of organizing demonstrations of miners in Trepca in February 1989. In the absence of any evidence, the charges hinge on the fact that he visited the miners on strike at the Trepca mine. Vlasi was a convinced Titoist, but he had a base of support amongst the Albanian population. He and the other 14 accused,

among them the ex-manager of the mine, face several years in prison.

Half a million Albanians have passed through the hands of the special police and accounts of torture in the prisons are a regular feature of the Amnesty International bulletin. Yugoslavia has not signed the International Convention against torture in prisons.

At the end of the war, the Albanians had no rights in Yugoslavia. It was only in 1974 that the new constitution gave them some rights in the sphere of the Albanianization of schools and universities. But the demonstrations that broke out in 1981 for reasons that remain obscure saw the birth of the famous thesis about "counter-revolution", and the Albanians were reduced to second class citizenship. Little has been known

about this problem, due to lack of solid information, while the LCY in the other republics feared a clash with Serbia if they protested.

## Representative front of Yugoslav Albanians

The opposition in Kosovo has now begun to organize itself. Some 500,000 Albanians belong to the Democratic Union of Kosovo, led by Ibrahim Rugova, founded last December. This organization and its many factions are the first representative platform of Yugoslav Albanians, and may be able to control the desire for vengeance on the part of individuals and isolated groups. Albanians have never been scared of weapons and local traditions of vengeance make the Corsican vendetta look like a tea party. It is against this background that the mass departure of Serbs from Kosovo should be understood.

How did things get to this state? In the case of the Serb-Albanian dispute there is a symbolic conflict: in 1389, the Serbs were defeated on the Fields of Kosovo by the Turkish army. This was the end of the independent Serb kingdom, while Kosovo remained the heart of the Serb nation. Currently, the Albanian birth-rate is far higher than that of the Serbs and these latter have the feeling that their historic symbol is being taken over by strangers, these second-class citizens. The Albanians, in fact, have been living in the region for thousands of years. The Slavs arrived in the

1. Adem Demagi is an Albanian Yugoslav writer, who has never supported armed struggle. Nonetheless he seems to hold the European record for political imprisonment: 28 years.

Balkans at the time of the great invasions around the 6th century. Both sides refer to their own legitimacy without listening to the other.

It is no accident that this conflict has erupted now. These exacerbated nationalisms have their origins in a severe economic crisis, itself due to the system of cavalry charges practised on a national scale. When Fikret Abdic<sup>2</sup> fell, this Bosnian business man, who was very close to Tito, dragged down in his wake every illusion of a country that had wanted to play in the big league. The era of the pseudo-capitalists was over, and that of Slobodan Milosevic arrived.

"Slobo", as he is called both by his supporters and his enemies, wants to be more than merely the representative of the Serb republic. He sees himself as the guarantor of Yugoslav unity, the man arisen to replace Tito. The latter had in any case, a serious defect: he was Croat, not Serb. And it was Tito who granted Kosovo a certain measure of autonomy, and who had made sure not to designate a successor, putting in its place the "revolving presidency" system (each republic taking the office in turn for a year) and then going off leaving the situation to degenerate.

## Milosevic — the man of destiny?

Milosevic wants to reunify the country and rescue it from the crisis provoked by separatists from all nationalities and greedy business men. Even so, it would be a mistake to see in him a simple Poudjadist. Milosevic is an experienced politician, a fluent demagogue advocating freedoms — within specific limits, of course. Enjoying certain talents as a tribune, his intervention on the Kosovo Fields on the 600th anniversary of the battle was his moment of glory. Behind him came hundreds of vehicles decorated for the occasion, along with a broad cross-section of the Serb Orthodox clergy.

His meetings are a weapon against the LCY leaderships in the other republics, who might dare to show their defiance of the Serbs. In this way he has brought down the leaderships of the LCY in Vojvodina, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, dissociating the people, who supposedly love the Serbs and Yugoslavia, from their separatist leaderships. This system worked until the Slovenes, seeing the trap, prohibited one of these meetings in Ljubljana. In reply, Serbia decided on the immediate cessation of economic relations between the two republics, without thinking that this measure would cause Serbia a lot more trouble than Slovenia. In fact the pro-Milosevic paper, *Politika* soon decided that the blockade did not include paper....

In fact the Yugoslav problem dates



from the creation of the country in 1918. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismembered and disparate peoples were reunited in the same state. The vision of a "country of South Slavs" originated with certain late 19c intellectuals (Pribicevic, Supilo) as an alternative to the centuries of Austrian, Hungarian and Turkish domination. The scheme glided lightly over the myriad of other peoples who lived in the region — Bulgarians, Turks, Hungarians, Albanians, Romanians, Gypsies, Italians, Germans and others, who did not have a strong cultural identity. It also neglected the different experiences of colonial domination of the various Slav peoples: to simplify, Austrian domination of the Slovenes; Hungarian control of Croatia and Ottoman rule in Serbia. Despite permanent cultural resistance, the various occupiers left markedly different heritages, making dialogue between the South Slav peoples difficult and opening the way to a simmering racism.

## Lack of interest in everything beyond Zagreb

This generalized incomprehension leads Slovenes to consider everything that goes on beyond Zagreb as of no interest, the Croats to consider the Slovenes as pretentious snobs and to choke when they hear the term "Serbo-Croat" (there are two very different languages) and the Serbs to distrust the bourgeois separatists to their North. As for the rest....a single label, "Muslim nationality", serves as a holdall for the various non-Slav peoples of Islamic tradition. The classification allows the peculiarities of each community to be passed over and the whole lot to

be cast into the limbo of tranquil ignorance. Exception that proves the rule: the unity between Slovenes and Albanians, unimaginable five years ago, which stems from facing a common enemy — Serbia. The Kosovo events are only known about outside the province through the Slovene paper *Mladina*.

Slovenia's defiance of its powerful Serb neighbour is justified by the methods being employed both on the political and military plane. The Slovenes cannot be indifferent: if they do not condemn this intervention, what will they do in the case — hypothetical, but imagined by everybody — of an intervention directed not against Pristina, but at Ljubljana? Many young Slovenes are stating their determination to fight an eventual armed occupation, and it is doubtful that tanks could restore order if the situation deteriorated.

## Danger of Slovenian secession

The greatest danger that Serbia is watching out for is a Slovene secession. This republic of 2 million people provides 30% of the Yugoslav GNP. The rate of unemployment is only 2% despite the crisis, as opposed to 20% in the rest of the country. A break with the Federation, recently adopted in principle by the Slovene parliament, would not only lead to the Federation flying apart, but would also mean an economic cataclysm, leaving those republics and their populations who have lost out economically on the touch-line. Furthermore, the Serbian LC remains one of

2. The reference is to a major corruption scandal that led to the resignation of Bosnia-Herzegovina's vice-president in September 1987.



the last European Communist parties to adhere to traditional Communism with "democratic centralism", the single party and the nationalization of the economy. It is thus opposed by nature to Slovenia's economic liberalization and competitive spirit.

Serbia thus steps forward — and with justification — as the defender of a just distribution of production. But this leaves Slovenia feeling like the cow that produces the milk for the rest of the Federation, thanks to a logic of industrialization that the "brothers in the South" do not have. This shows the profound cultural imprint left by the past occupiers, Europeans in the North and Ottomans in the South. Furthermore, exchanges between Slovenia and the EEC and Austria are intensifying. It would not be surprising if Slovenia were to ask for official membership of the EEC. Perhaps the Croats would follow. They have always been the referees between Serbia, to which they feel close, at least in language, but which causes them a certain apprehension, and progressive but rather too capitalist Slovenia. But their culture pushes them more towards the North and West than towards the South and East. Even so, their attitude at the last extraordinary LCY Congress allowed Serbia to reject every proposition from Slovenia concerning the introduction of a more fashionable politico-economic system. The Slovene delegates walked out slamming the door. Yugoslavia, not so long ago the pioneer of a self-managing Socialism independent from Moscow, now finds itself at the back of the pack of the Central European countries for nearly everything.

### Central government hopes storm will pass

It is probable that the worst is yet to come. The alternative facing the federal power is between leaving each republic to take its distance (at the risk of letting the separatist movements get out of control) or to freeze the situation, hoping that the storm will pass. It is the latter option that is currently being followed, and which could arouse the two most activated peoples to take radical measures. A chain reaction throughout Yugoslavia could then be expected, preceding a disintegration with tragic consequences for some populations. Furthermore, neighbouring countries will take an interest in the territories concerned: a Bulgarian can say, half-jokingly: "there is only one real problem in Yugoslavia: Macedonia." Italy has already annexed Trieste. And if Tirana is supporting the Albanian nationalists, it is certainly not for reasons of altruism. But what alternative solution has the central government, that was more or less absent at the start of the events in Kosovo and has left Serbia to settle its own accounts with the Albanians? ★

# Italian students challenge elitist reform of higher education

FOR SOME years, the Italian media have tried to counterpose the new generation, the youth of the 1980s, to those who had led the movements of the 1968-1977 period. Conformist, studious, worried about their careers, attached to the values of individualism and the family — such was the portrait of today's students drawn by the major Italian newspapers and widely held by the public. A new flareup of student struggles has suddenly swept away these commonplaces and revealed them to be mystifications. Certainly, the struggles of youth today do not express the same ideas or the same forms of political radicalization that marked the preceding movements. But they express nonetheless the values of solidarity, egalitarianism and democracy which bear the traces of their predecessors and bear witness, in spite of all the ruptures and changes of the 1980s, to the persistence of a memory of the struggles of the past.

ISAAC PARODI

**A**T THE BEGINNING of the student mobilizations of the last two months, a situation of advanced decay existed in the Italian universities, whose structures have remained almost unchanged since the beginning of the 1970s, even though the student population is today three times larger. The discontent of the students has material roots which are obvious to all — hardly any Italian university has a modern campus, the libraries are extremely poor, and there is a shortage of lecture theatres.

Education is costly and students receive only very limited support from the state. Student grants (which benefit only a small minority of students) go from 400 dollars a year in Palermo (the minimum) to 2000 dollars in Milan, which is absolutely insufficient to live off. Several faculties offer no professional openings, limiting themselves to keeping the future unemployed off the streets. Moreover, the conditions of life for the students are often very difficult — university restaurants and hostels are rare, whereas rents have increased considerably in all the big towns.

If this catastrophic situation constituted the background to the movement, its deto-

nator has been the legislation for reform of the present university system presented by the Minister of Scientific Research, the Socialist Antonio Ruberti. Inspired by the conceptions underlying the Devaquet law, rejected three years ago by French students (see *IV* 111, December 22, 1986), this legislation ostensibly proposed "financial, administrative and educational autonomy" for the universities, but in reality proposed what amounted to their privatization.

### Private funding for university research

According to the legislation, teaching and university research would have to be financed by industry and private capital, and adapt itself to their needs. Consequently, representatives of industry and private companies would have to be given places on the administrative councils of the universities, not just to give their opinions on different scientific projects but with decision-making power. This reform does not radically change the existing situation, when already, in Rome, any citizen able to give 100 million lira to the univer-

sity can sit on the administrative council. The government proposes to rationalize and accentuate this tendency.

The immediate consequences of such a reform are obvious. The humanities, already strongly penalized by the existing budgets, would be completely abandoned and marginalized. Thanks to their new "autonomy", the universities could fix the conditions of admission and costs of registration as they wished. This would immediately create a hierarchy between a small nucleus of prestigious and modern universities, reserved for an elite with access to the means necessary to enter, and a great number of second class universities, along the Japanese or US models.

In Italy, such a reform would deepen still further the disequilibrium between the north and south of the peninsula. The universities of the north would transform themselves into research laboratories in the service of the big companies, whilst in the weakly industrialized south, the universities — already few enough and growing weaker in a number of areas — could well become totally useless and able to survive thanks only to the finances bestowed by certain politicians seeking an electoral clientele.

### Giving Palermo university to the Mafia

This explains why the student protests began in Palermo, capital of Sicily. In this region, to privatize the university would mean quite simply putting it into the hands of the Mafia. Starting on December 5 of last year, the Palermo student strike movement rapidly translated itself into an occupation of the town campus. Gradually, the movement spread throughout the peninsula. By mid-January, nearly every one of Italy's 50 universities was occupied. The big northern towns — notably Milan — joined the movement somewhat later than those of the south and centre.

One of the features marking the movement is its democratic functioning. No grouping or political force has been able to impose its own priorities on it. The forms of struggle have always been decided in the course of very lively general assemblies, in which every position can express itself. The students have also shown that the new technologies can be utilized in a democratic and "alternative" manner. Fax machines have replaced the old duplicators and have allowed the establishment of a network of communications between the different universities.

The breadth of the movement was apparent at the national demonstration held on February 3 in Rome. According to press estimates, 100,000 students and high school students (the latter having a massive presence) from all over the country, streamed through the capital's streets. The occupations continued, Minister Ruberti having refused to withdraw his proposed law on "university autonomy"

(he is ready to discuss the details — not the content — but only with non-strikers).

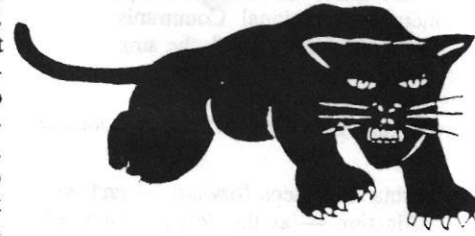
The immediate goals of the movement are the withdrawal of the proposed legislation and the safeguarding of the right to study. The students defend a certain number of simple but fundamental principles. For Rome high school student Alessandro Mantovani, "The kind of school we want must be free, for ordinary people, capable of giving an equal chance to everybody. It must be pluralist and above all public, without any equivocation. The legislation proposed by the government and the Confindustria (the employer's association) proposes to save our schools through privatization. After having consciously abandoned the public services, they want to entrust them to Berlusconi, Agnelli and their friends" (*L'Unità*, February 3, 1990).

The flowering of the struggle has radically changed the climate inside the universities. Some rightist organizations, for example the fundamentalist Catholic movement *Comunione e Liberazione* (Communion and Liberation), linked to the Christian Democrats and strongly implanted on the campuses for a decade or more, have lost their hegemonic role. In Milan, its traditional bastion, *Comunione e Liberazione* was marginalized during the assembly that decided on the occupation of the university.

### Far left provides cadres and organizers

On the other hand, the militants of the organizations of the revolutionary left, very much in a minority among the students, have often played a role in the forefront of the struggle. Without representing the political leadership of the movement, they have provided it with an important number of cadres and organizers. This has been the pretext for an attempt to witchhunt the movement, which the reactionary press has presented as being "manipulated" by the extreme left. Decidedly, the nightmare of the anti-capitalist revolt of the 1970s has not ceased to haunt the corridors of power.

The Socialist Party daily, whose crude and vulgar anti-communism increases in the same measure as its readership diminishes, characterized the leaders of the students in struggle as "archaic communists of the ilk of Ceausescu" (see *Avanti!*, January 19, 1990). The Christian Democrat Minister of the Interior Antonio Gava, known for his links with the Camorra (the Naples mafia), has even invoked the possibility of "infiltration" of the movement by terrorist groups, a theme which has been taken up, in more moderate terms, by the head of government Giulio Andreotti (*Il Corriere della Sera*, February 13, 1990). These hysterical reactions have only resulted in the radicalization of the movement which has taken an openly anti-government character and has gradu-



*Movimento Studentesco Romano 1990*

ally politicized itself. The amphitheatres of the faculties have been renamed "Tiananmen Hall" and "Intifada Hall".

The Communist Party (PCI) is divided on the question of the proposed reform and the university protest. Numerous intellectuals and lecturers who support the PCI have expressed their support for the Ruberti proposals. This is not astonishing — the adherence of the PCI to a plan for the privatization of the universities confirms the choice of this party in support for a market economy and a "modern" society founded on the dynamism of private enterprises. But reality shows that the social-democratic modernity of the PCI does not enthuse the new generations.

### Communist Youth for autonomy and privatization

On the other hand, the Federation of Communist Youth (FGCI) finds itself at the heart of the mobilizations and tries to play a role as "mediator" thanks to its presence on a national scale. The FGCI is favourable to autonomy and thus the entry of private capitalists into the universities, provided that the decision-making power of the students is increased so they can exercise "real" control over the functioning of the universities. In short, the PCI seems yet again to be torn apart by its contradictions. On the one hand, a radical opposition to privatization of the universities puts in question its neo-liberal choice and its "modernity"; on the other, it cannot permit itself to ignore or oppose itself to a social movement of such breadth, for fear of rendering still more weak and precarious its implantation amongst youth.

Until now, the majority has maintained its opposition to the reform in its totality, demanding its withdrawal and the resignation of Ruberti.

The movement faces two major problems. First, the necessity of creating a national coordination which is capable of organizing the continuing struggle and forming a common front against the reform bill. But secondly, it is necessary to go beyond the limits of the university and to liaise with the other social sectors which are the target for projects of privatization. Some initiatives in this direction have already been taken, but they are embryonic. It remains, however, the sole way in which the battle can be won. ★

# AROUND THE WORLD



## SOUTH KOREA

### Repression stepped up

THE BERLIN WALL has fallen, but the wall that divides the two Koreas remains solid and insurmountable. On February 5 of this year, two South Korean dissidents received heavy prison sentences for having illegally visited the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

The Seoul authorities sentenced Im-Suk-Yong, a young student of French literature, to ten years imprisonment for having participated in the International Festival of Youth held last summer in the North. Catholic priest Moon-Kyu-Hyun, who had also visited Pyongyang, received an eight year sentence. To show that they were not being manipulated by the Kim-il-Sung regime, the two oppositionists decided to return to Seoul, conscious of the consequences which awaited them.

The sentence handed out to Im-Suk-Yong also represents a response on the part of the government to the political radicalization of South Korean students. If the breadth of the mobilizations is a little reduced in comparison with the 1987 crisis and the Olympic Games of 1988, their political maturity (attributable to an extraordinary diffusion of Marxist literature in the university campuses), continues to advance, as does the radical content of their slogans.

The death of six policemen during a demonstration at Pusan University (Pusan is the South's second biggest city) on May 4, 1989, has led to a spiral of "militarization" of student struggles and police repression. Ten days later, a student from Kwanju — a town which was the scene in

1980 of a veritable massacre carried out by the armed forces of Chung-Doo-Wan, and which continues to be one of the bastions of the movement — died under torture, which exacerbated the conflicts still more. The last episode in this escalation of confrontations has been the occupation of the U.S. ambassador's residence in Seoul by a student commando unit on October 13, 1989.

Parallel to the student mobilizations, South Korea has been gripped in the last three years by numerous strike movements in all the principal cities. The working class, which has been for thirty years the victim of the astonishing South Korean "economic miracle", has decided to demand what is owing to it from the bosses and, after having won sizeable wage increases, is fighting for the legalization of its trade unions (see *IV* 156, February 6, 1989).

At the head of the workers' strikes are often found former militants of radical groups and organizations who have become workers (there is no unemployment in South Korea) after having been expelled from universities in recent years (before the 1987 liberalization). Consequently, a link exists between the workers' strikes and the struggles of the students, but this has not yet been translated into the birth of a unified social opposition movement.

There remains a considerable gap between the demands of the students (national reunification, expulsion of the U.S. troops, genuine democratization of the country, condemnation of the soldiers implicated in the Kwangju massacre) and those of the workers which are essentially economic (recognition of trade union rights). It is precisely such a coming together of students and workers that the regime today wishes to prevent at all costs.

For the South Korean government, the revolutionary events shaking Eastern Europe signify uniquely the opening up of new markets for an economy still largely export-orientated (this is the meaning of the normalization of relations with Hungary and, shortly, with the Soviet Union). On the other hand, for the students, the earthquakes in Eastern Europe show above all that the reunification of the country must be won by struggle and must involve the withdrawal of the

40,000 U.S. soldiers stationed in their country. It is difficult to forget the photograph of two South Korean students who, on the day the Berlin Wall fell, stood on top of the Brandenburg Gate to remind us that Korea remains divided. ★

## MOROCCO

### Hunger strikes

NEW hunger strikes have been taking place since the start of the year in Moroccan prisons at Marrakesh, Rabat and Meknes. For more than four years, Moroccan prisons have been agitated by waves of protests by political prisoners against bad conditions of detention.

On August 19, 1989, Abdelhak Chbada, a 28-year old student, died after a 64-day long hunger strike in Rabat. Three other prisoners, accused of belonging to the extreme leftist "March 23 movement" were hospitalized in a coma. Actions of the same type have taken place at other prisons in the country in Casablanca and Marrakesh. According to the Moroccan human rights organization there are still at least 26 political prisoners in Morocco.

On January 31, the political prisoners at the civil prison in Casablanca transmitted the following text to us:

"At the moment when an unlimited hunger strike of political prisoners is underway in Marrakesh and Rabat prisons, 11 political prisoners at Meknes find themselves forced, in their turn, to go on hunger strike from January 13, 1990 in order to get their legitimate rights to education, information, medical care, proper food, exercise and visits, as well as their right to meet amongst themselves respected.

"They have only resorted to going on hunger strike after vainly trying out every other means: they have asked for a dialogue with the prison administration, have repeatedly approached the central penal authorities and the Justice Ministry in writing with communiqués, open letters and so on.

"Faced with all these initiatives, in place of satisfying the legitimate demands of the prisoners, the administration has persisted in refusing to talk with us. Worse still, they have recently stepped up their harassment of prisoners and their families.

"We, the undersigned political prisoners held in the civil prison at Casablanca energetically condemn the murderous policy that is the response of the Moroccan leaders to the modest and legitimate demands of the hunger strikers and call on everybody with a living conscience, and every defender of human rights, to intervene with the Moroccan authorities with a view to the satisfaction of the demands of the hunger strikers, and, first of all, to prevent any repeat of the drama that has taken place in Marrakesh and Rabat." ★

Mohammed Qnouch, Abdallah Ajaha, Dahbi Machrouhi



# Needed more than ever — an independent women's movement

**L**AST DECEMBER women gathered in the Volksbühne theatre in central Berlin to set up an independent women's federation and adopted a "manifesto for an autonomous women's movement" (See p. 10). As Ina Merkel, an elected representative of this federation and author of the manifesto commented: "the first demand put forward is for the participation of women in every political decision."

In October 1989 a number of women decided, in the middle of the ferment, to get together to have an influence on events. For Ina Merkel: "If this time all the political decisions are taken without us, our chance to participate in the development of society will be lost for years".

After the mobilizations began, a rapid flowering of women's groups developed. They all stated, more or less in the same way, that in their country where "the equality of rights has been achieved"<sup>1</sup> not only was the contradiction between rhetoric and reality no longer acceptable, but that even the vast democratic movement that had come into being would not automatically guarantee that women's demands would be met. Only their active participation, and above all their self-organization within the movement would be able to guarantee their rights and their place in the elaboration of "a new social order".

## How March 8 became International Women's Day

Whether by coincidence or historical irony, it was the German Social Democracy that was the first, at the turn of the century, to organize around it, in difficult political conditions, a movement of socialist women several thousand strong.<sup>2</sup> It was at the behest of the German socialists that, in 1910, the Second International Conference of Socialist Women decided unanimously to make March 8 an international day for women's right to vote and other demands. The following year in Berlin 45,000 women took part on March 8....

There can be no doubt that this year, 80 years later, March 8 in East Germany will be decked out in quite different colours, far removed from the customary official march past.<sup>3</sup> It will regain its subversive quality. As the East German feminists say, the dangers of German reunification

**EIGHTY years after March 8 became an international day for women, even "formal equality" is far from being secured in most of the countries of the world. Feminism therefore retains a burning relevance, despite all the fashionable talk about its supercession.**

SOPHIE MASSOURI

as it is currently being planned give them serious cause for concern about their rights and gains.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Third World countries, it is women who are bearing the brunt of the austerity policies imposed by the big colonial powers. They are also the first victims of religious phantasms.

## Attacks on the dignity of half of humanity

In some so-called "advanced" countries, like the United States, the right to abortion is being called into question, whether through simply being denied, or medicalized as if a woman's body belonged to all the world — apart from the woman. Violence, sexual mutilation, confinement...everywhere, in many forms, the dignity of half of humanity, and thus of humanity as a whole is denied.

The most striking development of recent years is the more and more important organization of women in Africa and Latin America in the unions, the political organizations and in the struggles for defence of democratic rights. But this is not the only thing worth underlining. They are organizing more and more, and also more and more among themselves.

If, in 1889 the German socialists succeeded in working out and imposing a very concrete programme of demands aimed at women — which were taken up a short while after by the Second International — this was not because the whole of the German Social Democratic Party was deeply convinced of the need to do

this. It was, on the contrary, a product of the balance of forces constructed by the party's women militants. Even the most progressive forces of the international workers movement have never taken up "women's issues" by themselves. Everywhere women militants have had to take the initiative. In South Africa, in Brazil, in Nicaragua, in East Germany the various experiences of women inside their organizations show that it is sometimes difficult to stand up to the traditions of the workers movement on these issues.

In the United States, the strength of the mobilization of women in defence of their right to abortion has shown that it is possible to resist reactionary forces. At the same time, it has also shown that no woman's right is free from the danger of attack.

## Retreat of women's movement in some countries

In some European countries, the retreat of the women's movements, their incapacity to integrate new forces, above all young women, the absence in most cases of contacts with the trade union movement and with women in the labour market, makes the prospect of the new victories that are needed seem hypothetical for the moment.

But everywhere the mobilizations of women in mass democratic movements and in union struggles show that they have not ceased to fight and do not intend to be excluded.

At the same time, the rebuilding of a relationship of forces favourable to women needs new foundations. In this sense, the re-appearance of independent movements for women's rights in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union after decades of bureaucratic suppression (see articles in the dossier in this issue) represents a massive potential strengthening of the struggle for women's liberation worldwide. ★

1. According to East German ex-President Erich Hon-ecker at the 8th SED Congress in 1971.

2. Until 1908 women were not allowed to attend meetings.

3. Until now, March 8 has been an official holiday in East Germany.

4. Some 93% of East German women work. Social benefits and crèches are much better than those in West Germany, where, in addition, women's participation in the workforce is not so high.