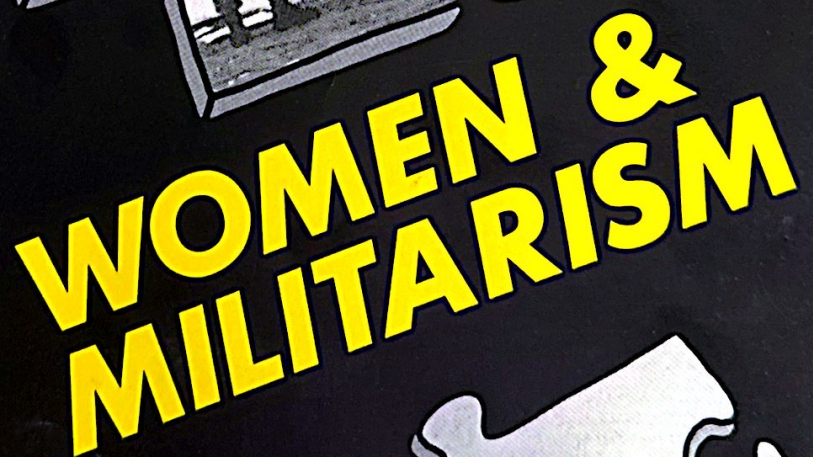
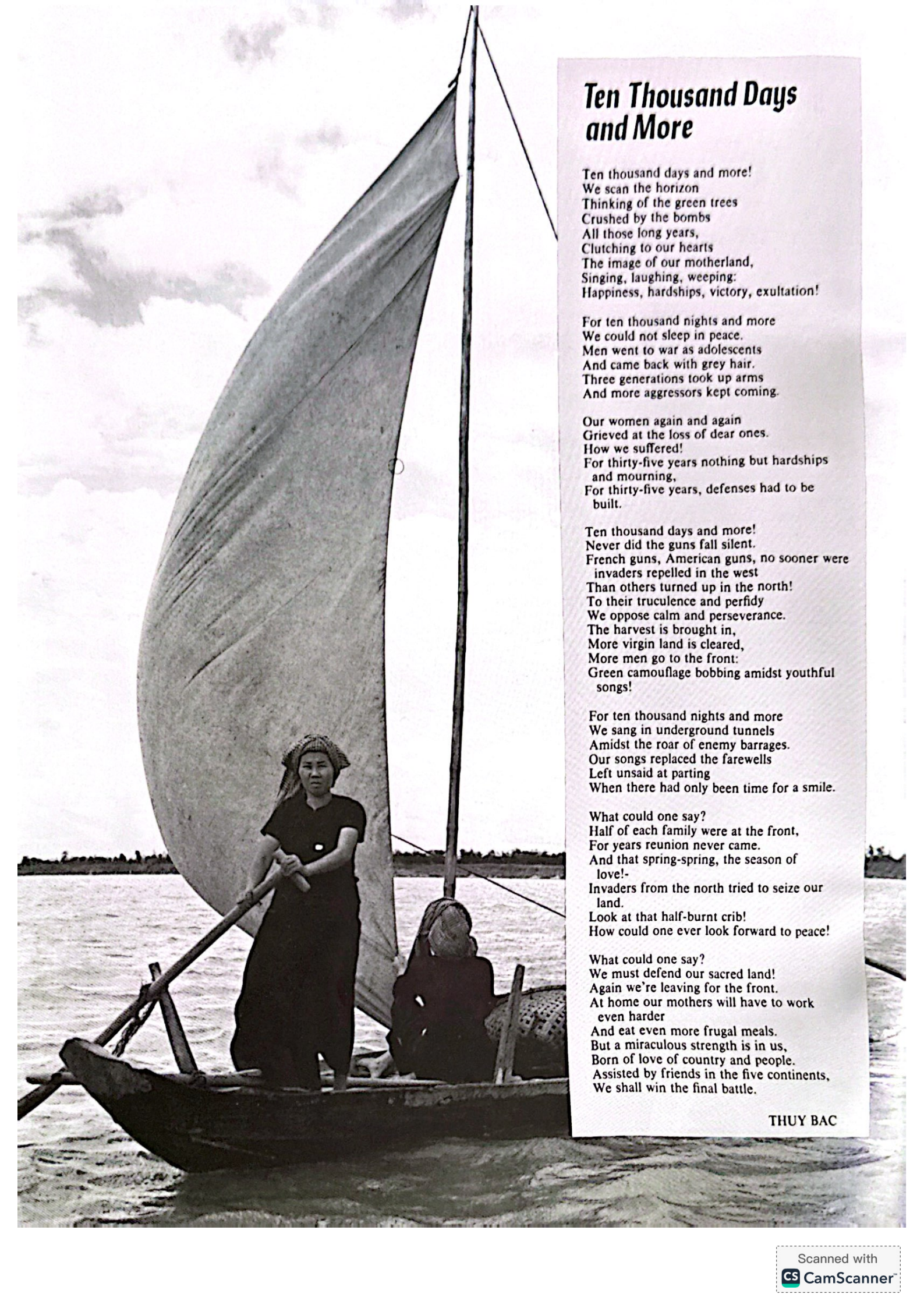


An International Women's Quarterly
Winter 1984-No. 11

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Ten Thousand Days and More

Ten thousand days and more!
We scan the horizon
Thinking of the green trees
Crushed by the bombs
All those long years,
Clutching to our hearts
The image of our motherland,
Singing, laughing, weeping:
Happiness, hardships, victory, exultation!

For ten thousand nights and more
We could not sleep in peace.
Men went to war as adolescents
And came back with grey hair.
Three generations took up arms
And more aggressors kept coming.

Our women again and again
Grieved at the loss of dear ones.
How we suffered!
For thirty-five years nothing but hardships
and mourning,
For thirty-five years, defenses had to be
built.

Ten thousand days and more!
Never did the guns fall silent.
French guns, American guns, no sooner were
invaders repelled in the west
Than others turned up in the north!
To their truculence and perfidy
We oppose calm and perseverance.
The harvest is brought in,
More virgin land is cleared,
More men go to the front:
Green camouflage bobbing amidst youthful
songs!

For ten thousand nights and more
We sang in underground tunnels
Amidst the roar of enemy barrages.
Our songs replaced the farewells
Left unsaid at parting
When there had only been time for a smile.

What could one say?
Half of each family were at the front,
For years reunion never came.
And that spring-spring, the season of
love!-
Invaders from the north tried to seize our
land.
Look at that half-burnt crib!
How could one ever look forward to peace!

What could one say?
We must defend our sacred land!
Again we're leaving for the front.
At home our mothers will have to work
even harder
And eat even more frugal meals.
But a miraculous strength is in us,
Born of love of country and people.
Assisted by friends in the five continents,
We shall win the final battle.

THUY BAC

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Statement

Connexions is the collective product of feminists of diverse nationalities and political perspectives committed to contributing to an international women's movement.

We want to go beyond merely providing facts and information, and hope that by passing on—as directly as possible—women's writing generally unavailable in the U.S., we will be helping women here to understand and connect with the experiences and viewpoints of women in other parts of the world. We also want to contribute to the growth of a worldwide network connecting women working on similar projects by researching, establishing contacts and exchanging information with other women's organizations.

To a large extent, the economic and political conditions under which we live determine the issues to which we give priority. Women do not live in a vacuum, but in what is still largely a man's world. It is essential for us to understand the workings of that world if we are to understand each other. We hope that *Connexions* will be one step toward building an international women's movement.

Connexions is published every three months and each issue focuses on a specific theme.

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INTRODUCTION

WOMEN AND MILITARISM: We're in the Army Now

**An average of 11 wars
are fought each year.**

**Since 1945 there have
been 150 wars.**

The U.S. invasion of Grenada has faded from the front pages to be replaced by the latest casualty reports in Lebanon. As the year draws to a close, the cruise missiles have arrived at Greenham Common, the Soviets have walked out of the Geneva arms talks, and the largest peace demonstrations since World War II have taken place in Europe. What the screaming headlines have ignored or successfully de-emphasized are the multitude of wars that have been continuing for days, months, years—wars in which the major involvement of the U.S. and other industrial nations has been that of suppliers of arms.

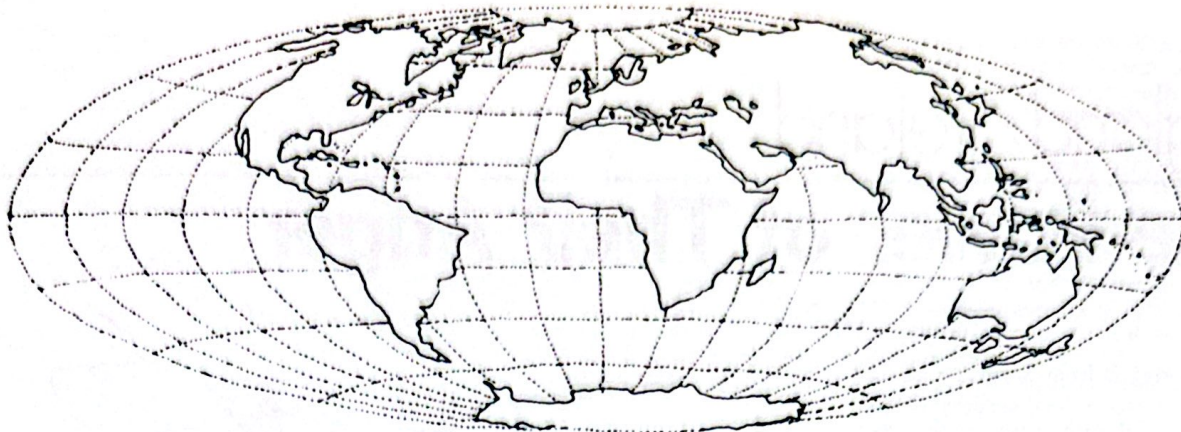
In this issue we present examples of how militarism affects women's lives, how we as women suffer from the act of war and how we perpetuate it. While putting together this issue our discussions revolved around the complexity of militarism, the nature of its power and its relationship to women.

Militarism is a deeply embedded, ongoing set of processes which operate long before and long after actual battles are fought. Women's role is often portrayed as secondary to the serious business of soldiering. However, without women's participation, the institution of militarism would come to a grinding halt. Once we recognize the active roles that women play, then we can begin to see the many possible ways that militarism can be challenged.

Militarism is directly supported by the ever-expanding arms industry, which encompasses a vast number of jobs both directly and indirectly connected to actual arms production. Such diverse fields as computer science, medicine, communications, nuclear technology and the food industry are part of this huge network which also includes arms trading, storage and transport industries. The weapons industry is dependent upon the civilian sector for labor, and women are there—in offices, labs, warehouses, hospitals and on factory floors.

In 1982 the U.S., the world's leading arms exporter, supplied one and a half times more weapons to other countries than did the U.S.S.R. Weapon manufacturers and suppliers worldwide sell to any nation or group willing to buy, regardless of where they sit on the political spectrum. Like any other item produced in our consumer society, markets for the endless surplus of weapons must be found. The drive for political and economic control, national security, or liberation struggles provide these markets, and when they falter, the suppliers encourage them.

Militarism is also linked to the consumer practices of our society. A standard of living that makes extravagant use of resources encourages industrial nations to constantly look for newer and cheaper sources of raw materials and goods. We continually see the pattern repeated: multinationals appropriate arable land that was once used to grow basic foodstuffs. The power of multinationals is stronger than the pressure hungry people can exert to oppose this trend. To fully assure the people's continued acquiescence to the needs of multinationals, military



Worldwide there have only been 26 days without battle since the end of World War II, all of which fell in the month of September 1945.

force or the threat of force is often required, for it takes guns as well as money to make people act against their own interests.

Beyond the economic factors which militarize society, an ideological support system is needed to mobilize people's hearts and minds to the diverse needs of militarism. Every nation on earth uses propaganda to direct its citizens to "proper" behavior. For nations whose streets are free of battle, propaganda is used to make militarism attractive. In other countries, where war is not an event only seen on television, the luxury of not being involved is no longer there.

Propaganda formulates several categories for women in order to provide incentives and support services to soldiers. They are cast as wives, mothers, sweethearts, prostitutes, and nurses—or as the enemy, justifying rape, mutilation and murder, any of which is likely to earn a soldier respect and medals. The roles propaganda assigns to women, and that women play voluntarily or involuntarily, not only help to justify but also *motivate* soldiers to play theirs.

Besides its mobilizing function, propaganda in its less direct forms provides an even more subtle yet equally vital service for the military, and thus militarism. Suffused throughout the society at large, propaganda at this level is designed to construct a social reality in which the presence of the military is seen as a normal, essential and familiar point of reference in daily life. Absorbed throughout the society, militarism as a "mindset" appears in language, fashion, games, etc.

If the militarization of a society, economically, psychologically and ideologically, is a concrete reality of militarism, it is also then a *state of war*. Indeed actual combat is but one facet of war. Seen this way, there are very few countries that are not in some way "at war." For example, can a nation, whose policies spawn war or whose power enables it to wage war by "remote control," boast of being a nation at peace? Similarly, can it be considered a state of peace when a nation must maintain internal order by systematically torturing or "disappearing" its own population?

And is the war really over when the gunfire has stopped? Can the remnants of broken cultures, families and landscapes, the lingering health, psychological and social disorders be what we shall call peace? Can children reared in refugee camps amidst the anger and despair of homeless people be expected to bear within them the promise of future peace?

Only when we begin to understand the complexity of war can we effectively challenge it in all its disguises.

Further reading: *"Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarization of Women's Lives"* by Cynthia Enloe, South End Press, 1983.

Contact: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1213 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19107. War Resister's League, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012.

The Power of Their Anger

(The following is from *Spare Rib*, August 1983, #133)

We are two English feminists who have been involved in blockades to stop preparatory work for siting cruise missiles at Greenham Common. We went to Belfast in March for the International Women's Day picket at Armagh gaol, where 30 women republican prisoners are held. We see connections between the peace campaign at Greenham and the struggle of republican women in Northern Ireland, and we feel strongly that feminists and women in the peace movement should support the republican women. We realise that there are problems for us as English and middle class feminists trying to write about what's happening in Ireland because we don't know enough about it, and it's all too easy for us to go over and have a look and think we've understood, when in fact we haven't.

SOLIDARITY

In going to Armagh, we wanted to understand the role of the British military in Ireland as well as show our solidarity. We wanted to relate what is going on in Ireland to what we have learned from our experiences in Greenham.

We see the republican struggle as one against British imperialism. The British army is in Northern Ireland to back the majority loyalist population's domination of the minority nationalist community—a state of affairs which arose historically because of British economic interests.

By "imperialism" we mean the domination or attempted domination, economic, ideological and cultural of one country by another.

By "militarism" we mean a state's use of force: both the actual use of force and the constant threat of its use. Militarism is used to enforce or maintain imperialism. Its personnel are a powerful group within the ruling class. The military consumes ever increasing amounts of hardware, creates the need for new technology for weapons and new sites, all in order to be better than the militaries of the countries it regards as enemies or those it wishes to dominate. The military thus maintains sections of industry which depend on its existence for a guaranteed and profitable market.

At Greenham, admittedly, different women have different views about what they are struggling for. Some seem to be overwhelmingly concerned with "peace" in Britain, that is, simply stopping the deployment of the cruise missiles. Others see the

By "militarism" we mean a state's use of force: both the actual use of force and the constant threat of its use... "Niceness" conceals rather than confronts the power of the state.

struggle more broadly. We go to Greenham to protest British and U.S. militarism: we see stopping the cruise as part of a wider struggle against British military and imperialist power. We see it as a demand to end government spending on arms, to re-direct money for jobs, health, education and to alter radically the basis of a society which sanctions violence against women and imperialist intervention in Northern Ireland.

IMPERIALISM

British imperialist intervention doesn't stop in Northern Ireland. The British army is present in nearly 50 countries in the world—from the Persian Gulf countries of Masghat and Oman to the Mediterranean countries of Cyprus and Malta to South East Asian and Latin American countries. The British army has not been at peace in this century. All women's lives in those countries are affected by the presence of the British army.



Spare Rib/Abby Rose

In Northern Ireland, we saw the brutal realities of militarism: the army is there on the streets and nationalists suffer from their constant harassment. Their homes are raided in the middle of the night, people have to go through checkpoints and roadblocks just to get to the shops. The signs of occupation are everywhere: police cars, dogs, guns, helicopters.

At Greenham we see two faces of militarism. During the Easter blockade, the police on the ground treated protesters as if we'd all come for a family outing, while in the sky huge troop helicopters ferrying soldiers from other bases reminded us of the sophisticated technology which is at the disposal of the army. In the background, there were mounted police and riot shields, and Holloway Prison had cells prepared. These were scarcely used at Easter, but we should be under no illusions that they won't be used if "necessary", as will the rest of the hardware and tactics which have been so thoroughly tested in Northern Ireland.

MILITARISM AND SEXUAL OPPRESSION

Women can perhaps understand what imperialism means by analogy with the way male aggression and sexuality is used to control us. Men colonise our body and spirit; they humiliate and degrade us through violence. Rape makes us aware,

deep within ourselves, of the power and domination of men. Militaries like ours in Northern Ireland operate in the same way. They attempt to control the nationalists by constant harassment, by endless petty incidents and by deeply humiliating gestures. One republican woman described to us how, as her husband's coffin was carried away from her house, the Brits stopped the funeral procession and threw a Union Jack over the coffin.

Militarism and the sexual oppression of women are linked. Men's daily experience of having power over women is mirrored in the army, where the physically toughest men are idolised and the physically weak are ridiculed and homosexuality is vigorously suppressed in public. Militarism glorifies male power, promotes rigid hierarchies and unquestioning obedience, and sees only the possibilities of "winning" and "losing". In confronting British militarism in the form of cruise missiles, women at Greenham have felt a sense of power through taking action together. It is a sense which comes from women collectively expressing rage at how wantonly men are treating our world and from insisting that we want something different.

In Belfast we met women who also believed passionately in the possibility of change. These are women who experience oppression by the British army and the Unionists in their everyday life, a very different experience from the invisible, but menacing, threat of nuclear weapons. The women in Armagh believe in change despite the farce of "trial" in the juryless Diplock courts and/or interrogation at Castlereagh. At present they are regularly subjected to strip searches which are by force if they refuse to cooperate. Yet the power of their anger, their determination, remains enormous.

RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

We support the Irish people's right to self-determination, and as British women we can't say how they should go about achieving it, or whether or not they should use violence. The nationalist movement has historically taken the form of both armed struggle and non-violent protests. The ten year-long Civil Rights movement, the no-wash protest in Armagh and the blanket protest in Long Kesh; the hunger strike of 1981 in which ten men died: all these were non-violent protests.

Many feminists hesitate to support armed liberation struggles because we know that the very machismo which oppresses us as women will be cultivated in any army. In Ireland women have to make a decision to be involved in the struggle for liberation using whatever means possible, or to continue to suffer the acute oppression of their people in silence. Since this machismo makes the experience of women within liberation struggles more difficult, they need our support all the more.

We are aware that even when armed liberation struggle leads to national liberation, the violence which people have had to endure leaves its legacy. The scars left by years in which violence has been a daily occurrence are likely to affect women's lives

especially. It is also true that imperialism does not end immediately after the forces of the imperialist country withdraw: the patriarchal structures and deeply internalised oppression remain, for a time at least. The speed with which they can be dismantled will depend on those who are politically active both now and after the British withdrawal. This is why, in Ireland, it is so important for women to be involved in the nationalist struggle at the political level, now. In fact in the last few years, Sinn Féin [the political wing of the provisional IRA], has begun to take women's issues seriously. This change has been brought about by the insistence of women.

NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

While imperialism in Northern Ireland has to be fought on many different levels, using non-violent resistance to oppose militarism at Greenham seems the most direct way to confront the assumptions of military ideology. Resistance to the most destructive weapons ever created has to be in the form of making those weapons more real and the system which creates them more accountable. The women of Greenham Common are trying to do that. We need to understand the obscenity of the power that goes with nuclear weapons, a power which denies women significance, both individually and collectively.

Some of us are put off by the media image of non-violent resistance associated with the peace movement: the peace activist in wellington boots who smiles at everyone including the policeman, believing that she

has moral rightness on her side. Insofar as there is any truth in this image, we feel distrust because we know that such "niceness" conceals rather than confronts the power of the state.

We also dislike such "niceness" because we know women are used to absorbing anger, both our own and that of men, and turning it on ourselves. To continue to do that is contrary to all that we have learnt in the Women's Liberation Movement—to assert our own needs, our feelings, to express our fear and anger in whatever ways we can.

For women at Greenham, anger is both a problem and a necessary driving force keeping them there. Being committed not to express anger through violence, they have to find other ways of using anger as a political force. Singing on blockades and laughing in court, for instance, have been more powerful than we might expect because of the intense anger they express.

The form of resistance at Greenham has allowed women of widely varying ages, backgrounds and politics to take action collectively and with great strength. Their struggle is connected to that of the nationalists in Northern Ireland by its challenge to the military power of Britain, a military which is used to maintain imperialism in Ireland. □

Further Reading:

- "A Farewell to Armed Patriarchy" in *Connexions*, #1, Summer 1981.



Demonstration in Scotland commemorating Hiroshima and in support of Greenham Common women.

Bernie Graham/SCRAM

Entertaining the Boys

The post-war ruin and confusion led not only to the expansion of military bases, but to the destruction of the entire social and economic structure.

(From *Ampo*, English-language Japanese quarterly, No 4, 1982.)

After World War II, the island of Okinawa was placed under the rule of the American occupation forces. The best, most level land was expropriated and transformed by bulldozers into vast military bases forcing many people to give up farming and become base workers. Some chose to migrate to other countries, while others moved to outlying islands where land was still available. In 1950, the U.S. announced that it was turning the military bases on Okinawa into permanent installations. In 1951, with Japan's agreement, the island was placed under U.S. administrative control. No one had bothered to consult the Okinawans on this decision. Since the '50s, people have been protesting the U.S. occupation. In 1972, Okinawa "reverted" to Japanese rule.

The island of Okinawa was the only part of Japan used as a battlefield during World War II, and suffered 150,000 deaths. The post-war ruin and confusion led not only to the expansion of military bases (52% of the American bases in Japan are located here), but to the destruction of the entire social and economic structure, including fertile farmland. The everyday life of people became a struggle, especially for women.

Some women, especially war widows, become prostitutes for American soldiers on the bases. Although Japan's constitution contains an anti-prostitution law, Okinawa was, at that time, out of Japan's control and jurisdiction. Shortly after the War ended, dealers took over the prostitution business and placed all prostitutes under their command. Pimps controlled these women through an advance loan system. A woman might request a loan out of severe financial need, but by attaching high interest rates and arbitrary fines, a pimp could use it as a continuous source of control. The following explanation by one prostitute accurately describes the situation:

"Most customers are soldiers from the base. Within a year I became quite ill and had to stay in bed for a whole month. As my advance loan grew and because I was afraid of taking soldiers that had returned from Vietnam, I moved from one place to another. I've been here for seven years now, and my loan has never dimin-

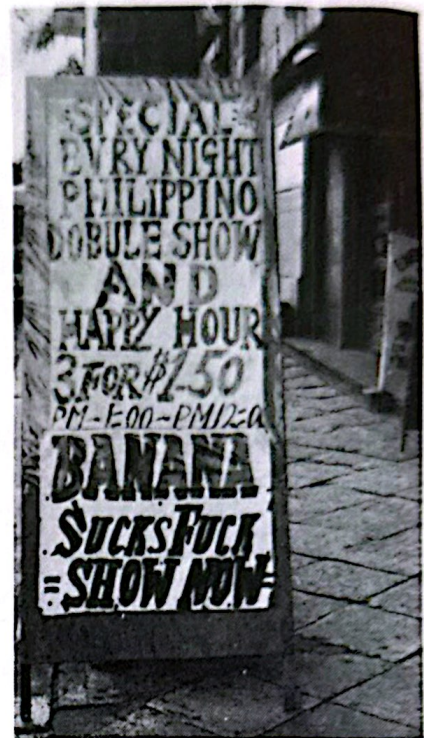
ished even though I've had 20 to 30 customers a night. Instead, the sum increased, because an additional \$5 or \$10 was added as a fine whenever I had my period or was pregnant and couldn't take any customers."

Okinawa's economy relies primarily on prostitution. In 1969 a government survey determined that there were 7,362 full-time prostitutes, although the actual number is believed to be twice that. Using the estimated population figure, the ratio would be one prostitute out of every 30 women. If each one of those 7000 women earned \$20 a night, their total earnings would be \$50.4 billion a year. Compared to the island's largest industry, sugar, which exported \$43.5 billion in 1970, prostitution is clearly the more profitable business.

During the Vietnam War, Okinawa's economy enjoyed a boom due to the nightlife surrounding the base, where one could find prostitutes working in social bars. In its heyday, there were more than 1,200 "approved" bars, night clubs and restaurants, where soldiers spent money freely. Bomber pilots came and went almost daily and returning soldiers, their pockets filled



Inside a disco near Kadena Air Force Base.



A common advertisement seen on the streets near the Air Force Base in Okinawa City.

with dollars, sometimes spent all their money in one night out of the anxiousness and frustration of not knowing how their lives would be the next day. But not all prostitutes catered to the American soldiers. In some places, the customers were local men and Japanese tourists.

GOAT EYES

The American military personnel have also caused problems by neglecting the children they father. Beyond the 400 legal marriages performed per year, there are also quite a few common law marriages which result in mixed-blood children. But due to the high rate of divorce and desertion, 80% of the estimated 3,500 children live only with their mothers. (There are more single mothers in Okinawa than any other area in Japan.) Due to a history of trade with China and the islands to the south, Okinawans tend to be more open to foreigners than mainland Japanese. But the mixed-blood children, products of the American presence, are treated with contempt. They are labelled *Amerika*, *Kurombo* (Nigger), *Chijiru* (Curly hair), and *Heejarmie* (Goat-eyes, Blue-eyes). Consequently these children usually have a harder time adjusting than other children.

In addition, some 80-100 of these children are without citizenship. Neither the Japanese citizenship law, which is patrilineal, nor the American law, which determines citizenship by birthplace, recognizes

these children. They have no legal rights and cannot obtain passports, so they are unable to travel freely outside the country that so despises them. And since many of the mothers have never married, it is almost impossible for these women to go through the necessary legal procedures to have their children naturalized.

A fundamental solution can only be obtained by reforming the citizenship law into an egalitarian and nondiscriminatory one for both women and men.

On Okinawa almost everyone has lost some relative during the war and strong resentment toward war is still in the minds of the people who survived. Their emotional hostility sometimes gets targeted against these American-looking, mixed-blood children. This is probably because of the political conditions that Okinawa was forced to accept.

Recently, this extreme discrimination has become less prevalent due to the increasing prosperity of many of the children. This is partly due to the increased number of these children, and to the Japanese media which draws a favorable portrait of these mixed-blood children. Yet the basic hostility of the population has changed little.

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS ON BASE

Since the reversion to Japanese rule, young people are dropping out of school in

any of the bases and by repairing the fence at Camp Kinzer. The demand that the fence be repaired implies the acceptance and continued existence of military occupation.

The deterioration of the fences represents the base's long history on the island. For 37 years these bases have been the most significant bases in the Far East. Moreover, the fact that the fences haven't been mended shows that the base has become an integral part of the society. This contrasts sharply with the situation right after World War II when the military police used dogs to guard against break-ins, and the people's movement against the base was quite strong. Asking the U.S. to fix the fences is contradictory because by requesting the repair, the continued existence of the bases on Okinawa is being accepted.

After the Vietnam War ended and Okinawa had been returned to Japan, Japan's anti-prostitution law came into effect. In addition, counseling services were made available. After restoration the economy around the base weakened. (The bases, however, were not abandoned; there are still more than 30,000 military personnel on the island.) English billboards were erased and the approved bars, formerly busy with so many soldiers, lost their privileges as well as their legal restrictions. Most bar owners started new businesses. Koza became Okinawa city and a huge shopping center was erected to attract tour-

U.S. BASES IN OKINAWA



Okinawan woman entering the U.S. Kin Base with a GI.

Since 52% of the total American bases operating in Japan are located in Okinawa there is the feeling that Okinawa is located on the base rather than the base is on Okinawa.

increasing numbers. This is partially due to high unemployment and the demands of the Japanese school system. With nothing to do, the students frequent discos and rollerskating rinks, where they meet soldiers. According to a Board of Education survey, 9% of the respondents admitted that they had been to the base within a six-month period.

Last year, it was revealed that soldiers were sneaking high school girls they had met onto the base. The girls were brought in through a hole in a fence, but sometimes the girls were even allowed to go in through the main gate, as long as they were escorted by soldiers. The Okinawa prefectural government urged the U.S. authorities to stop this activity by enforcing discipline so that no teenager would go on

ists. Once again, many women turned to prostitution in light of the unstable economic situation caused by the change in currency.

Not only are native Okinawan women returning to familiar methods of survival, but the new economy is also being rebuilt by bringing in Philippine women at low wages to entertain the soldiers. In Kin City the ratio of Philippine women to Japanese women is already six to four.

The women enter Japan on an entertainment visa, good for two months, which they renew once in order to stay a total of four months. The actual working conditions are far worse than the contracts state. For instance, the contract guarantees \$500-600 a month for six to eight hours a day, meals and one day off per week. In reality,

however, each woman receives \$280-350, works 10 to 12 hours a day, gets only one day off per month, lives in one big room for all the women, and is allotted \$3 to buy food which she has to cook herself. They are allowed to take a 15 minute break while the band plays, but usually they will work as hostesses or waitresses, so they can earn extra income. Many of these women are attracted to Okinawa because conditions in the Philippines are more difficult. Often they end up involved in prostitution.

After World War II there was a strong movement in Okinawa which pressed for the restoration and the protection of human rights. Yet women who had been subjected to very oppressive conditions were excluded. People protested when soldiers assaulted housewives and students, but nothing was done about the killing of prostitutes, which happened more frequently. The population's discriminatory attitude toward women in general made it difficult for people to understand how the growth of prostitution is directly related to the existence of the American bases. □

Related Reading:

• "U.S. Military Bases in the Philippines," *Southeast Asia Chronicle* #89, April 1983.

Further Reading:

• See *Connexions* #12, Spring 1984, upcoming issue on Prostitution.

Arms in Babes

Palestine

(The following was written by the Movement of Democratic Women in Israel and presented at the U.N. International Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, Aug. 29-Sept. 7, 1983.)

The lives and development of Palestinian children are shaped by the phenomenon of growing up generation after generation in exile. Palestinians of the diaspora, in and outside the occupied territories, constantly dream of returning. For many, life has been a refugee-camp existence with an absence of security and elementary rights. There are few Palestinian families who have been spared the traumas of violent death, imprisonment or forced division.

For Palestinians under occupation, the slogan is *zumud* (holding on): stick to your village, your refugee camp, your piece of land and your olive tree (if it has not already been taken away)! Do not let them rob you of what is left! One also lives in the hope that one day he or she will be home again. It is in this atmosphere that Palestinian children are growing up. Hearing their parents constantly express their longing for home is only part of the story. What shapes their conscience is not only the unsettled existence in refugee camps or temporary lodging, but the outright aggression of the occupying forces. For many occupation means the Israeli soldiers enforcing curfew or making arrests, manning road blocks or searching people. They know the Israeli in the shape of an oppressive enemy who continues to deprive Palestinians of homes, land and freedom.

At an early age Palestinian children develop primitive weapons to defend themselves against the Israeli soldiers. They collect stones and are trained in hurling them. Older boys or girls with prison experience instruct their friends on "how to behave" under interrogation or when they are beaten up. Under curfew, children are used to rush food supplies to those in need; they man lookouts or observation posts; they invent new methods of survival. Israeli settlers claim that stone-throwing Palestinian youngsters are as dangerous as sharp-shooters and, therefore, should be punished as such, with long jail terms or deportation to neighboring countries.

What do Palestinian children dream of becoming when they grow up? Who are their heroes? Their answers are freedom fighters, guerrillas, "pilots for liberation." These visions are also expressed in their drawings and games. Naturally, they play "war," "police," "torture"—all those things that have become part of their families' lives. But even playing "hide and seek" becomes a war game of sorts as they pretend to hide from soldiers.

Palestinian children participate in pupils' committees and demonstrations at an early age, although conditions demand

that they help at home or take jobs as low-paid agricultural workers. At home, in over-crowded dwellings, tension and chaos frequently prevail. Traditional lifestyles disintegrate, but there is also more emancipation—girls become more independent and publicly active as equals in work, studies and political life.

Cultural activities are also dominated by national aspirations. Forbidden to hoist the Palestinian flag, children will invent a multitude of ways to exhibit the national colors, through paintings, ceramics, embroidery, clothing, knitting, or wall hangings.

Questions arise. How does one *not* despair after so many years in exile, deprived and persecuted, after Sabra and Shattila, and in view of intensifying Israeli colonization? How, under such desperate conditions, does one keep going? The time factor here has nothing in common with the desire for instant fulfillment and the haste

that prevails in modern industrial society. The East has learnt to be patient; justice will eventually come. If grandfather goes to bed each night with a bunch of keys that fit the locks of his long non-existent house in one of the bulldozed Arab villages that have become Israeli fields, it is a quite ordinary reminder of what is bound to come one day: homecoming.

Grandchildren find this quite normal because time and again they have heard their mother tell stories of what home was like. They have learned every detail so well that they could find their way to the site of their dreams. And if home is unreachable, they at least want to be as near as possible.

Unfortunately, the accumulation of hatred, recrimination and resistance among young Palestinians further deepens the already existing abyss that prevents dialogue. A dialogue which is necessary for peacemaking based on a just solution of the Palestinian issue. □



Maintenant

Women Against the Occupation

(In response to an inquiry to the Israeli group Women Against Occupation about their activities, *Connexions* received the following reply dated October 10, 1983.)

Our group does not have a clear cut position about each issue that exists here, for example, the question of Zionism. There are women in our group who are anti-Zionist (myself included) and support the establishment of a democratic and secular state in all of Palestine. Others support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories, either as a minimum program or as a permanent solution. Since all positions are decided on by consensus, we have not gone on record as supporting any defined political solution and do not exclude Zionist women from joining our group. Actually the only positions one has to agree upon when joining are women's liberation (broadly defined), Israel out of Lebanon and the occupied territories, and self-determination for the Palestinians. I see this as the broadest possible political basis on which women can organize as feminists, since I see the state of war between Israel and our Arab neighbors and the oppression of Palestinian rights as the main issue blocking women's emancipation in Israel and that of Palestinian women.

I think it is really astounding that such a group emerged, since I've been politically active for some years and the feminist movement here has always been small, limited and crippled by elitism and has refused to take political positions.

Right now we are involved in several projects. The main ones are support for the strike of women Palestinian political prisoners. We held a second demonstration last week with the participation of the prisoners' families and members of women's groups in the West Bank. It looks as if this is going to be a long and bitter struggle since both sides are determined to win and we need all the international support we can get.

Another project is establishing ties and permanent relations with women's groups in the West Bank. We have already met with them and will continue in order to work together on all relevant issues.

(The following is compiled from a statement published by Women Against Occupation in April 1983 and from an article especially written for *Connexions* in October 1983.)

In June 1982, the group Women Against Occupation [originally called Women Against the Invasion of Lebanon] was formed in Israel as a direct response to



Signs read left to right: silence means consent; women against the invasion of Lebanon; we won't be alibis for murder.

the war in Lebanon. With its massive destruction of a civilian population, this war quickly lifted the facade of Israel's higher moral status for those who still clung to that antiquated belief. Using the excuse that the PLO was storing arms in southern Lebanon, the Israeli Army bombed hospitals and schools there. Cluster bombs and phosphorous bombs, two particularly barbaric types of weapons supplied courtesy of the United States, rained upon southern Lebanon. Electricity was cut off and food supplies were not allowed to enter Beirut for days. The massacres in the Sabra and Shattila refugee camps, horrifying as they were, were but symbols of the greater destruction wrought upon Lebanon by the Israelis. As the days, months and now year drag on, it becomes increasingly clear that this is a war of terror designed to liquidate as many Palestinians as possible and to petrify into submission those who are left alive.

In addition to being highly critical of the invasion, many Israeli Jews have begun to reexamine their own society and to discuss the role of war in their lives. Beyond its dubious military aims, war serves as a smoke screen to cover up many of Israel's internal problems. How convenient to conduct a war financed by the USA, which at

the same time deflects attention from Israel's continued occupation of Arab land from the 1967 war, from the 130% yearly inflation rate, from the increasing conflict between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, and from the continuing oppression of women.

Women Against Occupation was organized both to protest the war and to expose the links between militarism and the subjugation of women. Although many anti-war groups sprang up following the invasion, we felt that it was important to organize specifically as women. When a heckler at one of our demonstrations told us that we "would be better off baking cakes for the soldiers," it was evident that the attitude is that it is a woman's duty to support the men at war, and if there was to be anything said or done, it should be by men.

Yet it was precisely the anticipation of this attitude which caused our group to raise the slogan "Silence means approval," which embodies our position that it is our right and duty to protest against the war for several reasons: women should be perceived as equal members of society and should take part in and responsibility for any decision made by the society they live in; we believe that since women do not (as a rule) initiate wars or take an active part in

them, they have every right to protest against this situation which has been imposed upon them; the fact that society traditionally demands women to reproduce, take care of the home and children, suffer violence, and support the men from behind the lines, provides the very grounds for women's right to object to war.

In a militaristic society one's worth comes from having served in the army, from having been on the front lines. Those who have not served are considered unworthy of speaking out and of participating fully in the nation. Such a claim is raised against Israeli Arabs, whose non-service in the army is often used to legitimize their oppression and to silence them. Although Jewish women do serve in the army, they do so in primarily supportive and servile roles (teaching, secretarial, etc.) and are thus excluded from full national participation. Issues which relate specifically to women such as battery, abortion, and reform of divorce laws are given short shrift. Even within the anti-war movement our views are not taken seriously, because we have not seen "action."

The repercussions of this action have been acutely felt by Palestinian and Lebanese women since the invasion. In this war, directed as it is at a civilian population, women and children suffer heavier casualties than men, who are mobile. To the women who are not killed or injured are left the daily pressures of looking for food and water when there is little to be had, of taking care of the wounded, and of searching for male friends and relatives who have been dragged off by Israeli soldiers into "detention camps."

The effects of war, however, extend much further than its direct physical consequences. They serve to reinforce the entire social structure, particularly the role delegated to women. First, women are used as alibis for war, "it is waged for our protection and for the security of our families." Later, we are expected to be grateful and nurturing toward those who risked their lives on our behalf. Yet, the hypocrisy of the vanquishing army toward women is clear: to its own women it projects a sentimental glorification of the home and family, to enemy women there is overt hatred and an attempt to destroy these same institutions.

The recent debate in Israel over abortion and the new tax law, which will give more aid to large Jewish families, exposes the reactionary way in which a militaristic society views women. Several months ago a \$50 surcharge was imposed on all Israeli citizens leaving the country. The added revenue is to be allocated to all families with four or more children in which the father has either served in the army or has been exempt from military service due to religious reasons. More recently the government changed a law, which gave a sum of money to every mother at every birth enabling poor families to buy needed equipment, clothing, etc. for the child, to a law giving subsidies only to women bearing their fourth child, and again only to those belonging to families meeting the above-mentioned stipulations. In short, these laws

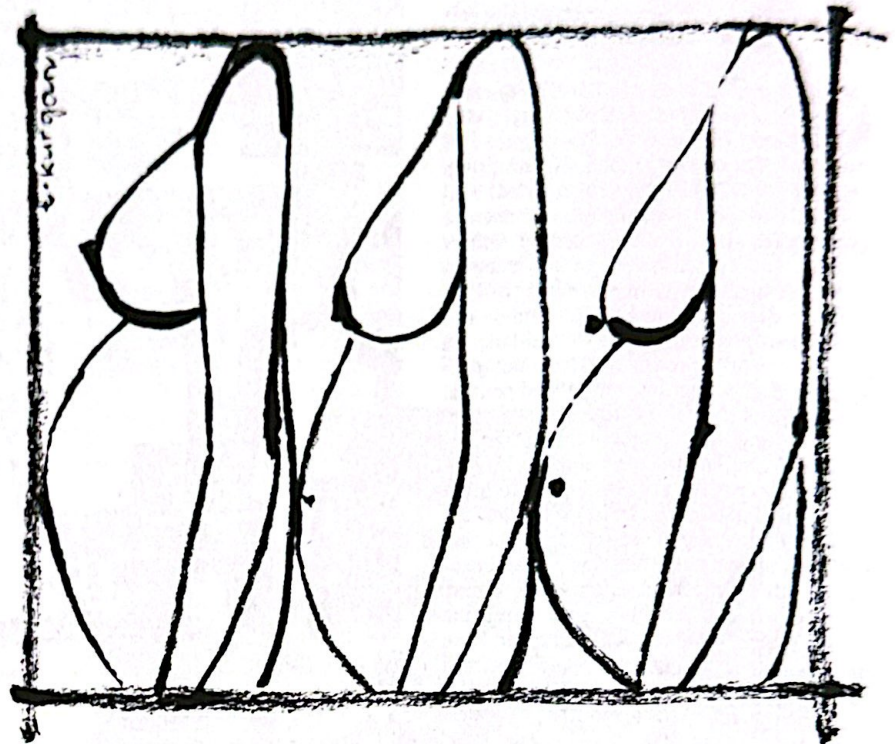
apply to Jews only.

Hand in hand with increased aid to large families is a restrictive abortion law. In 1979 a clause in the abortion law enabling women to abort on socio-economic grounds was repealed, making abortion legal (but not free of charge) only in cases of incest, rape, religious reasons, severe physical damage to the mother or child, and other extreme cases.

It is not a coincidence that the issue of abortion comes up in the midst of war. Dr. Haim Sadan, advisor to the Minister of Health, said in an interview that "abortions have resulted in the loss of 20 [army] divi-

anism and the anti-war movement and we participated in the Fifth National Feminist Conference in Haifa, where our workshops on the war and on Arab women were the most heavily attended.

During the debates on abortion, we focused our attention on that issue while continuing to participate as a distinct group in anti-war demonstrations. We printed a poster that illustrates the role of women in Israel. It shows a woman as a mechanical baby maker. To her womb are connected two umbilical cords. One is connected to a group of identical boys dressed in soldiers' uniforms, and the other to a group of mini-



sions since the creation of the state." The sexual division of Jewish labor is thus clearly laid out: men are drafted into the army to kill Palestinians, while women's wombs are mobilized to produce more soldiers and to solve the demographic problem. How is the Jewish state to remain in existence if the Jewish birth rate declines? Former Prime Minister Golda Meir is on record as having declared that she couldn't sleep nights thinking of all the Arab babies born.

On the other hand, it is unofficially reported by some persons that Arab women in Israel (1948 borders) can have abortions on demand, are indeed encouraged to use contraceptives and abort, in total contrast to the situation of Jewish Israeli women.

The Jewish woman is thus viewed as a machine of reproduction. Her ability to reproduce is her most valued asset. Consequently, to struggle for abortion rights challenges the state in a fundamental way. Women Against Occupation is currently involved in this struggle—a change in direction from when we first started. In the beginning, we organized women-only demonstrations against the war and were concerned specifically with the war's destruction. We wrote pamphlets linking fem-

aturized baby machine women.

At this point our group is predominantly Jewish, although Palestinian women have participated in our various activities. Recently, we have been making contact with Palestinian women outside of our group in Arab villages and on the West Bank. We have begun to visit Palestinian women who have been imprisoned for being politically active. We feel this is a first step toward closer communication with Palestinian women.

In the above statement, we have raised a few points which we believe can throw some light on the correlation between the permanent state of war which exists in our region and the oppression of Jewish and Palestinian women. We believe that ending this state of war by establishing an independent Palestinian state and guaranteeing all Palestinians human and democratic rights is a major issue in our struggle for women's emancipation. □

Further reading:

- "Israeli Response to War: An Israeli Feminist Account", in *American Friends Service Committee Women's Newsletter*, Volume 4, Number 1, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

Italy In Whose Service?

"We cannot simplistically resolve the problem of peace by merely saying that we are against militarism."

(Translated from *EFFE*, Italian feminist monthly, July 1980.)

If women are admitted to the armed forces are they gaining liberation or only a paycheck? Are feminists who support the right of women to join the military, compromising their commitment against militarism? Is there a difference between women's participation in non-liberation armies and a militia fighting for national liberation? The following article, which combines a letter to the editors of *EFFE* and the magazine's response, presents various perspectives of an ongoing debate within the women's movement. We at *Connexions* do not agree with the magazine's response, but are presenting it in recognition that many view access to something that is being denied, such as the right to join the armed services, as a step toward liberation.

THE LETTER

Dear comrades,

I am a woman, 24 years old, who is part of CoSmit—Collective for the Demilitarization of the Territory. So far I am the only woman in the collective, perhaps because women's interest in such issues operates at another level: on an individual basis or within women-only groups.

Our collective deals mainly with the issues of military service, armaments, the war industry, and the legal/political systems that support it. Our aim is to reach a socio-economic order free from the perverse logic of military blocks and to establish the base for a society in which it is no longer necessary to maintain a defensive army and an industry of death. This means working toward building an anarchic society, which measures itself against the needs of individuals rather than against the needs of oppressive structures.

The issue that concerns me greatly these days is the matter of voluntary military service for women. One bill has already been presented by the Italian Socialist Party and another by the Christian Democrats, which would allow women to volunteer for the armed forces.

Once again, women are made to believe that they are taking a step toward liberation by being given access to the military and the war industry, which up until now have been the exclusive domain of men. Instead of a modification of the existing civilian work structure, which would

afford men and women equal work opportunities, we are offered a placebo. The offer not only silences a whole sector of women by giving them the impression of having gained some equality, it also helps resolve the military's problem of a lack of volunteers. Our attention is thus drawn away from such questions as why does the military exist? Who does it benefit? Whose interests does it defend and whose interests does it conceal?

THE RESPONSE

Up until now we have managed to avoid this issue, but I think the time has come for some reflection. To begin with, it seems to me that a distinction must be made between the commitment toward disarmament and the problem of the participation of women in armed struggles, whether they are in liberation armies or in defense of a nation.

In the history of women's movements and politics, there is a "traditional" commitment toward peace. In the past and still today women's congresses, demonstrations and national and international conferences are dedicated to this theme. Frankly, I cannot prevent myself from thinking that here again is the perpetuation of the stereotypical woman; the presupposition is that women are against violence, are a peaceful element and do not play soldier. Thus, women's organizations find themselves assigned the task of being an instrument of pressure in the struggle for peace and, therefore, always far from real power.

Just as it is not fair to expect women to be against war merely because we are women, so we cannot simplistically resolve the problem of peace by merely saying that we are against militarism. Especially now, when so many women are engaged in struggles to attain or defend the liberty of their countries, firm declarations and slogans such as "women are against war and therefore will never take up arms" raise doubts in me. It is one thing to be in favor of general, verifiable disarmament, but it is another not to realize that in the transition a country cannot simply dispense with its defensive army. Furthermore, it is one thing to want a different kind of army, differently trained and organized, a demo-

cratic army fully equipped for the defense of its own country, and quite another to say that women simply will not go into the military.

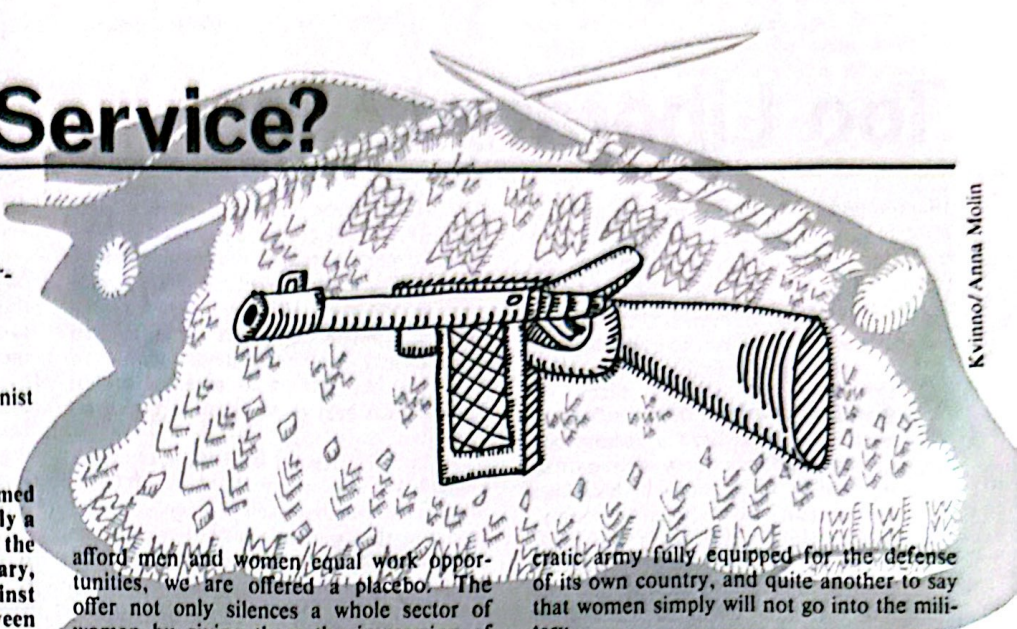
In our constitution it is written that, "Italy repudiates war as an offensive measure against the freedom of other countries or as a means by which to solve international controversies." But it also says that "the defense of the homeland is the sacred duty of each citizen." No distinction is made between men and women, and yet it is only now after 30 years since the adoption of the constitution that legislative proposals are being presented which open a military career to women.

Here it is not a question of drafting women (as the service would be voluntary), but rather of allowing women to enter into military careers. So how should we take such an offer? It certainly cannot be seen as a great victory for women. Indeed I am always somewhat unsure of such "victories." They are often the government's instruments of integration and rationalization, which ultimately weaken the present feminist movement which strives for the renewal of society. However, it also seems to me that the intransigent condemnation of military service for women is a pointless attack on those who feel differently.

If ours is a cultural revolution that seeks the "de-rolezation" of society and the recomposition of a total human being liberated finally from all oppressions, then why must we perpetuate discriminations that some women might feel are sexist? I believe that since our lived experiences and histories as women are different, the fact that some women want to be soldiers or fire-fighters or mechanics does not mean that we renounce the affirmation of our values. For our values are different and aim at the construction of a society without violence in which the integration of individuals, cultures and nations can indeed be realized on the premise of harmony and peace. □

Further Reading:

- "Loaded Questions: Women in the Military," ed. by W. Chapkis, Transnational Institute, 1981.



Kvinnor/Anna Molin

Too Liberated?

Zimbabwe

(Background information and *Moto* excerpts compiled from *Outwrite*, an English feminist monthly, October 1983, the interview and further information was submitted by Casey Kelso and Cara Lise Metz for *Connexions*.)

After years of combat many of Zimbabwe's women freedom fighters have discovered that the victory they thought they had secured is only partial. They are seen by many men—both civilian and ex-combatant—as a threat to society, since they no longer adhere to the traditional roles of submission and dependence.

Women were not admitted into the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), until the last seven years of the struggle as the need for military personnel increased. By the time the war ended in 1980, the original group of 30 women guerrillas had grown to over 500, in addition to another 200 who were in ZANLA's upper command.

The liberation struggle opened up new opportunities for some women. This is not to say that discrimination and sexism weren't common among the guerrillas, but the need for personnel caused men's attitudes to change from the usual "women aren't capable" to the more pragmatic "we'll take help wherever we can get it."

After independence, newly-elected Prime Minister Robert Mugabe pledged that all guerrillas were entitled to be part of the new national army. But instead of integrating the sexes, as they had been during the war, a tiny all-women's wing was formed. However, the country's war-torn economy could not support such a huge army and within a year nearly 40% of the military was demobilized, of which a significant number were women.

And what has happened to those women? Today many women ex-guerrillas are found in rural hospitals using first aid skills they acquired in the army. Others who had been typists for the liberation effort were fortunate to find work in Harare, the capital. The few who had some education and had risen in the military ranks, found positions in the new government. But outside the realm of employment, many women have found it difficult to fit into Zimbabwean society.

In the words of one letter printed in the national newspaper, some men find women ex-guerrillas too "stubborn" and "wild" to marry. Another column in the press warned that "increased belligerency among warrior women...is becoming a pathological obsession. Whatever the subject, whatever the question, they shout 'repression of women'—whether the query is how to run a railway or on breastfeeding."

The women ex-guerrillas are a vocal minority. Highly conscious of their oppression and empowered by their experience in the military, these women can become outcasts in the rural villages. Many children were born out of wedlock to these freedom fighters, and in the traditional view, this "damaged" the women as potential brides, since a great deal of emphasis is placed on virginity.

In 1979, Naomi Nhwitiwa, currently Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs, predicted that women's liberation could be safeguarded by women freedom fighters: "I am just hoping that the experience [women guerrillas] have and the life they led will make it difficult for them to really go back to the status quo. And we are going to encourage them. I think they have to keep being who they are."

What follows are several viewpoints on the status of women since independence. First, ex-combatants speak out about the lives of women in Zimbabwe today in excerpts originally printed in *Moto*, a Zimbabwean magazine. Most of these women were enrolled in a secretarial course at the time. The final interview, presenting a slightly different point of view, is with Tendi Ndlovu who joined the liberation struggle at the age of 17. After the independence, she was appointed Acting Director of Jonkwe, the official party publishing house.

Stella: We played an important role in the struggle, putting up with countless sleepless nights and other privations. Some of us paid the supreme price, laying down our lives for the country. But now we are treated as if we had committed a crime.

Most parents would not have their 'clean' sons marry an ex-combatant. They think that since we stayed in the bush so long, we are undisciplined and will not make good wives. Some people regard us as prostitutes because we wore trousers and slept side by side with men. But they must bear in mind that someone had to do it, or else how were we to be liberated...

I feel very strongly about the way our society is ostracising us—it shows a society riddled with prejudices.

Esther Muhambi: If a fight develops in the house, the women are quite capable of taking on the men. The women have discarded the old tradition that the man was the head of the family.

Farirai Mudzi: Women no longer depend solely on their parents and husbands for support as was the case in the past. A lot of us can earn our own living, making us more independent in everything, including the choice of husbands.

Anna Rusike: During the war, women fighters learnt to do things which before only the men had been considered capable of doing. When the war was over, some of them said they did not want to be married because they felt there was nothing that the men could offer them.

Of course one can understand their desire for independence but, to some, this desire did not preclude marriage. All they wanted was to be treated as partners in marriage and not as objects to be ordered around.

(Interview conducted by Casey Kelso in Harare, Zimbabwe in January 1982.)

Q: I'd like to know about your role in the struggle.

A: I have so much experience and I learned so much about women in the struggle. In 1972 I joined the struggle. We were over in Zambia and also in Mozambique. We were seven girls. We were the first. In 1973 we were carrying raw materials in Zambia, passing through Mozambique, at the border of Zimbabwe, and it was a long distance. And mostly it was done by women because at that time women were not allowed to come and operate as guerrillas inside Zimbabwe, so what we'd do is get ammunition and raw materials and give it to the front.

Q: You weren't allowed to carry guns?

A: Yes, we carried guns, but we were not allowed to come and operate inside. It was a long distance, very difficult—we would walk about six days there, and coming back would be four days when we didn't carry anything but our guns. But going was terrible! We had to carry ammunition, tents and so forth. We could not always find food, because the support we were getting at the time was not so much. At times, we'd spend about three days without food. So the war continued, in 1975 it was much easier. The female group which used to get raw materials divided up into four groups because there were many women who were coming then. Then the war stopped for about one year. I was working as a secretary, and was also in school. At that time I was also arrested and put in prison in Zambia for one year. I was the only girl in prison. It was in 1976 I was arrested and then deported to Mozambique. After my release from prison, I had the luck of teaching at the camp at Azania and I was working as the political director. In order for us women to realize that we are equal with men, we had to start educating both men and women.

Q: Did that happen?

A: It did happen. I can say, we women were



feeling inferior, so it was another oppression we had on our side, and men were feeling superior. So by the party teaching both men and women that we are equals, the men also had to accept this, and teach the women that they were equal with men. And then we introduced a program where women who were trained in the military should become instructors. And because most of the instructors we had in 1976-77 were women, all men who were coming to join the struggle were trained by women. So men *had* to accept women as equals because if a woman is teaching you strategy and tactics, you have to listen to her, because that could later save your life in battle.

Q: Today what is the role of women in Zimbabwe? I keep reading articles about how women guerrilla fighters can't get husbands.

A: We have a great role to play, in the government, in the party, in society, and we are trying by all means to have representatives in all the ministries. What we don't want is to have the Ministry of Women's Affairs be the only ministry for women. What we want is to have women as representatives in all ministries, and that the men should come and work with us to know what we are thinking, and give us their ideas.

Then there comes this question, this thing about the guerrilla girls having difficulty finding husbands. Well, you find that there are many individuals who are not involved in such case. I don't think it is very difficult for guerrilla women to get husbands. The only thing is that the men who were not in the struggle fear the women before they meet them because they were told that the women fighters are the most cruel, crueler than men, and other things like that. So men were afraid to approach guerrilla women. Although we ourselves, guerrilla men and guerrilla girls, we understand each other very well.

Q: I've heard that a lot of the freedom fighters had children during the struggle. Is that true?

A: Well, that is true. I cannot deny that. I don't think there is anything bad about that. Because in any revolutionary struggle like ours, you find such a situation. Most of the comrades who had children during the war, the fathers after independence took the mother and the baby as his wife and baby. And in those cases where a woman was rejected by her boyfriend and the man now wants to take the baby, you find most women are refusing. They don't want their babies to be taken from them, and they are fighting to keep that baby.

Q: Are you hopeful that women's rights will continue, and that women will gain more rights, or do you see it slipping back to traditional culture?

A: In this case, yes. What is necessary is for the women's organization to work very hard in the rural areas to teach both men and women, so we all understand what we are fighting for. Otherwise, it could go back.

□

Millions of dollars are poured into torture research...looking for ways to better destroy a human being.

Dollars for Torture

(Translated from *Emma*, West German feminist monthly, July 1983.)

Torture. The fact that it goes on is common knowledge. Many people have banded together to try to stop it, but only recently have a group of people come together to treat the victims of this worldwide billion dollar business.

Copenhagen, Denmark is home for the Center for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims, the only such medical center of its kind. For three years now Inge Genefke, a 44-year-old neurologist, has been the director of the clinic.

It was Genefke who in the early '70s formed Amnesty International's first medical team with the purpose of examining prisoners who were victims of torture. But simply medically substantiating whether one had been tortured did not satisfy her. In order to help these people to overcome the mental and physical trauma of torture, she established a center exclusively for rehabilitating victims of torture.

Spinal injuries, irreparable ear damage, limping, jaw injuries and cigarette burns are all noticeable results of torture. The unnoticeable are the nightmares that the victim has for years to come, the depression, the headaches, the guilt feelings, the suicidal thoughts.

Behind an even higher wall of silence and shame is the torment of women who were raped under torture, some in front of their parents, children or husbands. Not many women are able to talk about their torture because of the social attitude that makes them believe that they are at fault. Humiliation is a basic element of torture. Torture not "only" to force information from people, but also to break people—to destroy their psyche. The psychological damage is often far greater than the physical.

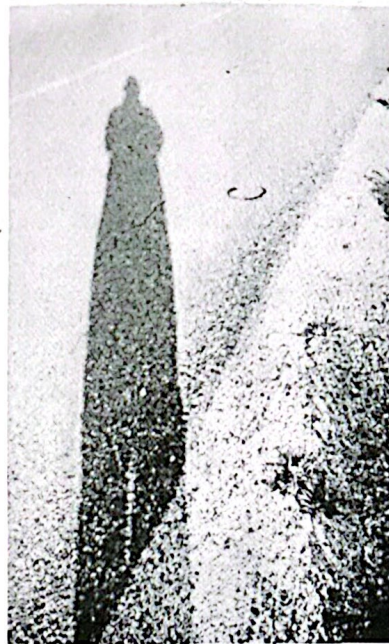
Despite their overwork, the center's success has kept the medical team going. In the beginning," explains Genefke, "we thought we would be able to help just a bit. But really heal? We never dared to hope for that. But we've learned that it is possible to cure someone effectively."

"To treat people we don't need large machines or special contraptions," continues Genefke. "These people need to be treated differently. Someone who has been through submarine torture (continually dunked under ice cold water) can not tolerate any form of hydro-therapy. To give an EKG to a victim of electro-shock or to try to give a blood test to someone who has undergone drug torture is unthinkable. And we have to

proceed slowly. Treatment cannot last more than an hour per day, nor can it be painful. The patient must also be informed of what you are doing and why at each step of the way. You must realize that many of the tests one goes through at the doctor's can bring back memories of being tortured."

Keeping in mind that the shocks, the drugs and the refined methods of psychological torture are the results of medical research, it's easy to understand why victims of torture have little trust in the medical profession.

The Center's team has learned from their experience that there are three basic principles in this type of therapy. First, physical and mental therapy must go hand in



Atropin/Birgit Kleber

hand from the very beginning. Second, the patient's children must be included in the treatment. For that reason the center employs pediatricians and educators. Thirdly, the wives of male victims also need attention. "When things finally start getting better for the men, it is then that the women begin to pay attention to their own pain."

Until that time, the women must remain strong. While their husbands are in prison, they are the ones who must take care of their families and deal with the authorities to find out if their husbands are alive and if so, where they are. When he is released, the women think that everything will be better. But instead the men come back damaged and depressed, and if they

have received asylum in another country, they are often unemployed. Other problems stem from the fact that while in prison, he dreams about "his" wife, who, by the time he is released, has changed dramatically. She is now a self-confident, strong and independent woman who has learned to take care of herself and her family. "It is tragic. The women must continue to exhibit strength, but at the same time play the role of being weak. Who can sustain that?"

Most of the patients the Center treats are from Latin America, India, Turkey and Africa, and must have received asylum in Denmark.

And how does the Center keep itself going? "We have to scratch in every corner. There is only money for the torturers," explains the Center's legal director. The Center has acquired most of its funding from the hospital it is connected to, along with some support from the United Nations. But with the exception of a few countries, such as the Scandinavian nations, money comes from few other places.

But millions of dollars are poured into torture research, much of it initiated by NATO. Doctors, psychiatrists and behavioralists regularly hold conferences, financed by state funds and NATO to discuss how one can better destroy a human being. Militarists and prison directors of the NATO countries attend seminars to discuss their latest finds with researchers.

Inge Genefke has learned that "unpopular" political comments are not welcome. The little money and support that the Center receives goes to a project whose purpose is to help those who have already been tortured. There is no support for a project to eliminate torture. Genefke wants to tell the world that by the very fact that this clinic exists "there is torture! Otherwise there would be no need for the clinic." Genefke maintains that such clinics should be everywhere.

Keeping the clinic going demands much strength and endurance. "What keeps us going is our success; the experience of actually helping people," explains Genefke. "Our patients are individuals who have fought against the oppressive forces of their country. They know what they've suffered for, and who tortured them and why. They have confronted their torturers with their resistance. There remains, even through the worst torture a bit of will, a bit of anger, some self-respect, which the torturer can't break. That is our greatest inspiration. It is not always possible to rob a person of his or her beliefs through torture." □

Guatemala

Look at me ...

(From *ACCION*, Peruvian feminist bimonthly, September-October 1981.)

Look at me:
I am those tortured ones you describe:
those feet
those mutilated hands.

I am the symbol
of all you will have to annihilate
to stop being human
and take on the profile of Ubico
of Somoza
of anyone of those tyrants
that you play with
and who serve you, as I do, to set up for yourself
an immense stage.

You do well great teacher.
I am the guerrillera of your regiment
the ob-ject
that rebels with weapons of love
between your army of gorilla egoism
and the power you dream of
at the end of your day's journey.

Track well my footsteps
in your soul
and crush without scruples
any shoot of subversive
tenderness
so that no love should catch hold
and then your ordered dictatorship
go straight to hell.

Perhaps I left the struggle
being a guerrillera doesn't lead to anything
more than those things
that you trace with a very subtle line.

I am not waiting for your next torture
not the day you throw me out
down the stairs
so that the dogs can bite my skull.
I love you
you are
my people.

But in your hands are clusters of cannon balls
and in your eyes obscure police
there is no
communication between my love
and your violence.

You, alienated country,
are not worth
the wasting of my bullets, my dream will never
become reality within your borders

I go into exile, dictator,
before I finish as a puddle of blood
on some paper road of yours.

I know
I will never be more than a
guerrillera of love.
I am placed something like this
as though on the erotic left.
Letting loose bullet after bullet
against the system.
Loosing time and force
preaching a worn out gospel.

I am going to end up like that other crazy one
that was left
cast away in the sierra.

But as my struggle
is not politics that serve men
they will never publish my diary
nor build industries for mass
consumption of posters
and scrap paper buttons of my photographs.

by Ana Maria Rodas

Translated for *Connexions* by Shana Ritter

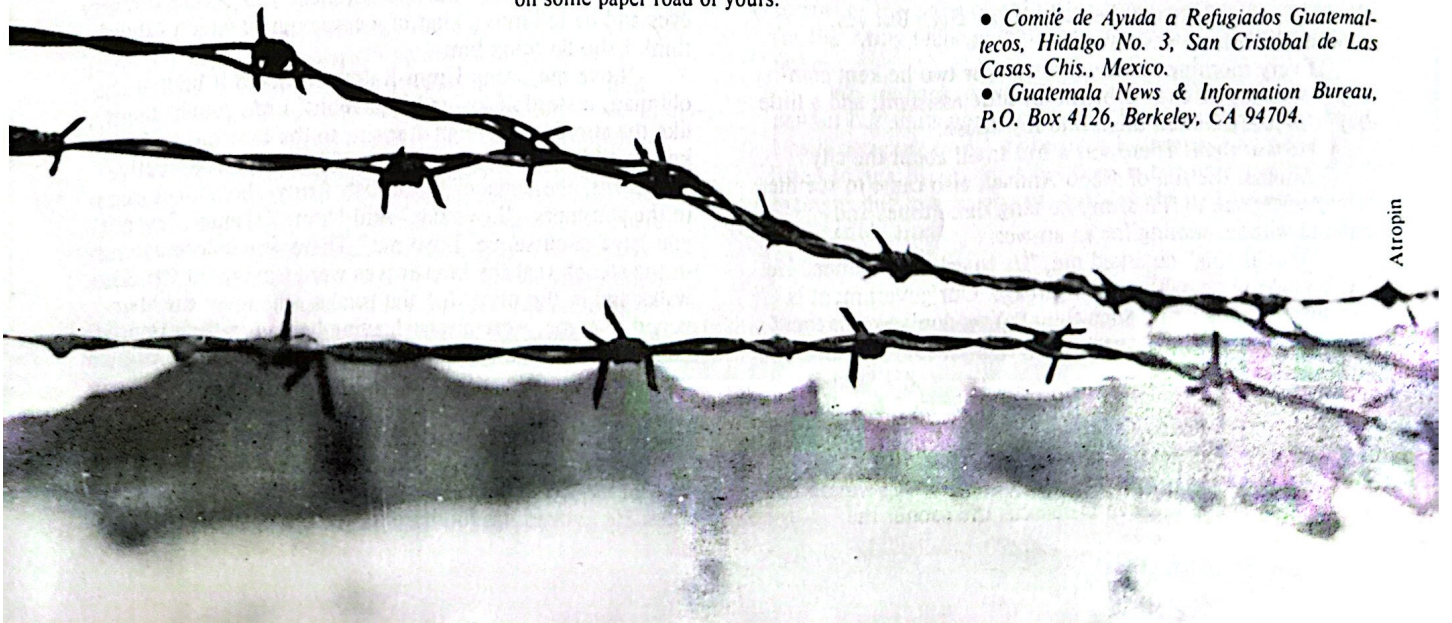
Further Reading:

- "I Can Only Struggle" in *Connexions* #6, Fall 1982.
- "We Continue Forever: Sorrow & Strength of Guatemalan Women," from *WIRES*, 2700 Broadway, Rm. 7, New York 10025.

Contact:

- Comité de Ayuda a Refugiados Guatemaltecos, Hidalgo No. 3, San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chis., Mexico.
- Guatemala News & Information Bureau, P.O. Box 4126, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Atropin





Grinnell

Amal Hayati

(MY LIFE'S HOPE) Written by Etel Adnan and translated for *Connexions* by the author.

It was midnight and through the branches of a tree in a sky as pale and translucent as the ancient blown glass of Syria the new moon was shining, similar to the curved sword of Saladdin...but, with this moon, also arose a particularly disagreeable stench.

My neighbor the grocer came to ask me if we had a dead rat somewhere, and we looked all over. The bath tub, in fact, was not impeccable, a faucet was dripping...but that was all.

Abou Ahmad left and then came back with this thing about the rat, looking very worried. The new moon never, as far as I knew, affected the smells of the city. But yes, indeed, the breeze was warm.

Every morning for about a week or two he kept coming. Yesterday he even brought his little assistant, and a little boy who just followed them into my house.

He was right. There was a bad smell about the city.

Ahmad, the son of Abou Ahmad, also came to see me. Being a sergeant in the army, he rang three times and entered without waiting for an answer.

"Would you," he asked me, "try to calm my father? He has become obsessed with the garbage. Our government is too busy to bother with such things. You don't expect the Syrian Army to collect smashed oranges or stray cats run over by cars!"

"On my way back from the Djabel Druze," I said, "I saw on the highway scores of dead donkeys devoured by millions of mosquitoes and flies...where was the Army?"

He looked so angered by my remarks that I wondered if I wouldn't have to leave Damascus the sooner the

better...the young military having such an aversion to donkeys, the more so if the latter clutter the roads.

"Ahmad," I said, softly, "your father is right. For years now people empty their garbage at night into the street, on the sidewalks, and everything looks so messy."

At that moment Abou Ahmad arrived. A big smile lit his face; he evidently was proud of the uniform worn by his son.

"Ahmad," he said to him, "you are young, you are in the Army, and you can do something to help. You know, we are Muslims, and dirt, in our religion, is a sin."

"The enemy is on our borders and our army is on the alert. City Hall should have done something but they don't have any money, all the money goes to Defense. It's a sacred duty."

"Ahmad, you are my son and you are in the Army...you can very well tell them, as they rule everything, that it is impossible for the people to sleep nowadays because of this stench. The people will die pretty soon, this rottenness is going to absorb them all."

Ahmad answered that there were secret and urgent missions and that the streets will be cleaned once the Revolution had totally succeeded. Hearing that, his father went into such a rage that I feared his face would explode like a grenade.

"For 20 years," the old man was shouting, "the Army has been swelling its belly at our expense, we are giving it our money, our work, our prayers, and all we have seen until now are dead Arabs; the enemy kills Arabs, and the Arabs kill only other Arabs. Ahmad, listen carefully, I am worn out...I want to die surrounded by the smell of flowers, not of gutters."

Ahmad left without saying a word.

The father was disappointed and embarrassed by his failure, even more so by the fact that there were witnesses to his helplessness. He was worried for his City. Unhappy to see something he had loved all his life deteriorate before his eyes: the river, in summertime, a dumpsite; the market place, in the evenings, a dumpsite; the streets, in the morning, covered with refuse...he suspected that spirits and ghosts themselves were covered with filth.

I offered him some food, mainly to distract him and not to let him leave on a humiliating note. When he was through eating I realized that his sadness was profound, that it did not go away. I went to the recorder and put on a tape. It was Umm Kalsoum [a famous Egyptian singer] singing. Bad luck wanted it to be "Amal Hayati" [My Life's Hope], a song that dug into his soul. I don't know what sorrow, what ocean of misery broke loose, but the old man aged before my very eyes and he fell into a kind of a coma out of which I didn't think I should bring him.

"Love me," sang Umm Kalsoum. Could it be that the old man, instead of losing his passions, had brought them, like the sun does through a prism, to the city that he had known all his life? The uprisings of 1936, the consecutive Ramadans, the tanks of the British Army, the apricot cases in the summers. "Love me," said Umm Kalsoum, "even if you have to curse me. Love me." There was indeed a curse in the stench that the housewives were leaving on the sidewalks and in the mess that the trucks, whenever they happened to come, were always leaving behind in their imperfect cleanings...the city's sidewalks always presented evil configurations, eternal stains.

The boy from the grocery store came to call Abou Ahmad. Abou Ahmad was weary, preoccupied, with no desire to go. He started talking to me about my uncle whom he had known for so many years, and about his meticulousness. He evoked the fountain in his courtyard, the rugs

which were folded the first days of the hot season, and that precious, almost annoying way my uncle had when he had to cross the slightest body of water: he looked like a nasty, perched bird to whom any contact was a contamination.

"Your uncle," said Abou Ahmad, "was a good Muslim. He used to rake away the dead leaves of his orchard in Bas-simeh, he used to scatter stones on his garden in order to stifle the dust, and spent hours choosing his cuts of meat."

I think that it was not only a feeling for cleanliness that guided him, but, rather, the fact that he was slightly out of step with life, and his constant irritation.

Abou Ahmad left. But it took him an hour, standing on my door step, to sort out the meanders of the decision he was about to make. Very simply, he had to organize a neighborhood protest, go together with relatives and friends to the "government" and ask for better public services. I said all right. I myself was sufficiently fed up with the sight of housewives pouring their daily garbage in front of their doors: at least if they could have left their garbage in paper bags taken from the grocery stores! No, they poured out their stinky and messy bags on the sidewalks, as soon as night had fallen, like old, rotten, useless grenades that terrorists would have left behind...the very image of the impotence of a whole people.

"My yesterday's love," sang Umm Kalsoum, "my love of today, my love for tomorrow..." her voice a dark and velvety blanket on the hopelessness of a city.

Quietly, for days, Abou Ahmad, his apprentice and myself went from door to door to solicit the will of the people to back us up. We did it gently, didn't force anyone's hand, did not insist...the population seemed to be so used to the stench that they behaved as if it didn't exist. The young people were the most indifferent: they only talked of war, or of the imported jeans they had just bought. I still have in front of me the expression of the young high school boy, the hardest face I had ever seen, when he told me: "Come on, it is we who are smelly, we the walking dead, the people...the whole city is a bad breath." Abou Ahmad objected that it was too much, that things weren't that bad, but...he could not understand that people could live so happily in the midst of so much dirt, but also he could not see how such a youngster could be so cynical...

We ended up finding about 15 people, the student included, who were ready to get together and do something about the situation. The argument that proved itself to be the most convincing was the one dearest to Abou Ahmad's heart: that uncleanness was somehow sacrilegious and painful to the Prophet's soul. Infections, epidemics, contagion, these are things invisible and unconvincing...when they happen, they are always lightning-like, they belong to the supernatural, and more than anything else they seem to belong to a divine order. Our procession set off singing Allahu Akbar and we soon arrived at the doors of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, where Ahmad was stationed.

It was obvious that an atmosphere of crisis pervaded the passers-by, the neighborhood, the policemen. In the well-to-do houses, in the markets, at the city gates where some caravans still arrive and unload, they were already speaking (I learned later) of a bloody counter-revolution.

Abou Ahmad called on his son. He was certain that this uniformed young man had great powers; Ahmad was a member of the Ministry's guard and spent his time standing sometimes on one foot and sometimes on the other. He looked furious at the sight of his father coming with a group of people, and somehow suspiciously worried.

At the door of what he called his "office," Ahmad was standing, remote, his father becoming for him a disturbing stranger, a disagreeable object that he had to throw away.

The father, beaming with pride, left us behind, went toward Ahmad and tried to take him into his arms and whisper into his ear. Then I saw him stop suddenly, look at his hands as if having touched the buttons of the uniform they felt cold and scared.

A few soldiers came to talk to us. They started sneering and laughing when we told them that we came about the garbage situation. "We are the backbone of the nation," they told us menacingly, "we are very busy...great things are going to happen."

"That's why we're here," interferred Abou Ahmad. "Call the City Commander, we're going to talk to him. The civilians are lazy and do-nothings, but the Army can make quick decisions, it has all the powers in its hands."

Ahmad seemed for a split second disarmed by what he considered to be his father's naiveté. (As for the City Commander no one knew where he was and he would certainly not have let himself be disturbed for so trivial a matter as ours.) He tried to reason with his father, telling him: "Listen, the Revolution will put everything in good order, give it time..."

"What's this Revolution of yours which smells so bad," shouted the old man, "yes, indeed, it smells, I swear by God that it smells!"

Ahmad was stricken with horror and went into the building, soldiers started rushing out through the doors, we were waiting in the street and on the stairs, Abou Ahmad was standing alone in the middle of all this fracas, making a speech on his youth, about that famous strike that paralyzed Damascus under the French occupation...He even went as far back as the Ottoman times.

Ahmad and two corporals came with their guns pointed in our direction. The former was wearing his sergeant's stripes which shined like his eyes. "Go away," he shouted, "go away, I have orders to stop this riot, to fire!..." It was clear that he was not joking.

We all retreated a bit. Abou Ahmad was shouting: "please! please!" and I think that he was still trying to hug his son, to win him over to his cause, by touching him, to integrate him into his own horror...Ahmad fired and the old man collapsed on the stairs.

Dead. Only the grocer's errand boy went close to his dead master. He then came back toward me and looked at me with the air of profound gravity that children can have, and asked: "How is it that Abou Ahmad is still crying after his death?" I answered him that sometimes tears accumulated in eyes run on their own even after someone had died.

Abou Ahmad had at least a clean sheet for his burial. The group that accompanied him to the Ministry accompanied him to the cemetery. His son led the service. I will never know if the smile he had that day was a grimace of sorrow or the pride of a duty accomplished...after all, he had for the Army feelings that one usually has for one's own father...

We are back in our dark dwellings. We have cleansed neither our souls nor our streets. "I have accepted the world, I have accepted love," sang Umm Kalsoum. And we will listen to her, listen, we will drown in her voice, will be extinguished in her, oh yes, one day she will die and we will feel terribly alone. □

The above story originally appeared in French in 1971 in the Lebanese newspaper L'Orient. Umm Kalsoum died in February 1975.

Further Reading:

• "Sitt Marie Rose" by Etel Adnan available for \$6.00 through Peoples Translation Service, 4228 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609

IN GOD'S NAME

(This article was written for *Connexions* by Fereshteh Gol-Mohammadi, Oct. 1983, and compiled from: *Iran Times*, Washington, D.C., July and August 1983, *Mojahed*, Paris, Sept. 1983, *Keyhan* and *Etleâat*, Tehran, 1975.)

In September 1983, the disastrous war between Iran and Iraq entered into its fourth year, a war that has cost 400,000 lives, left half a million disabled and two to three million refugees in Iran alone. The economic losses of this war are equal to its human casualties. Iran has spent billions of dollars to keep the war machine going. As a result, poverty, the loss of husbands and sons, and unemployment have deeply affected family life and brought about terrible consequences for women. In order to visualize the situation, a brief economic analysis is needed.

Iran's economy prior to Khomeini suffered from chronic production deficiencies on the one hand and enormous expenditures—mainly for the military—on the other. But, as difficult as this may have been, it doesn't approach the tragic situation of today. The social and economic disorders beginning in February 1979, when Khomeini took power, were accepted as part of the price that had to be paid for revolution. But the subsequent and prolonged incapability of the Mullahs [religious leaders] to run Iran have turned the situation into a disaster. From February 1979 to September 1980, industrial production fell to its lowest level ever, producing, some say, at only 10% of its capacity.

The agricultural sector suffered as well; the failure of the new regime to provide support for the farmers further damaged the already fragile level of productivity in the countryside, resulting in massive food shortages and unemployment in the cities and peasant migration.

WAR "SAVES" THE DAY

Prior to the war, Khomeini was deeply entangled both politically and economically in the domestic turmoil his revolution had caused. Many of the leading Mullahs, including Khomeini, could not hide their fears of imminent political breakdown. With the advent of war, however, people's attention was diverted away from domestic problems, and Iranians from the extreme right to the extreme left of the political spectrum were suddenly united against the foreign invader. Indeed, according to many political observers, the Iran/Iraq war was an important factor in the survival of Khomeini's regime.

However, if war boosts the economy

of the industrial nations that own the war supplies, it smashes the economy of the nations that consume them. Since Iran does not produce but rather buys its military hardware, it has not enjoyed the economic boom that often goes with war. Instead, it is the U.S., which had outfitted the Iranian army, that has emerged the real winner.

In the face of increasing military commitments to the war and declining economic possibilities, the jobless lower classes and particularly the peasantry were recruited for the army—a movement that further aggravated the crisis in the agricultural sector. Today, despite the fact that Iran is a massive importer, taking in 50 times more than it exports, shortages continue to proliferate. Inflation is unbearable for people from almost all walks of life. The price of rice for example has risen to almost \$7.00 a kilo on the black market, available yes, but who can afford it? For an average middle class family it means a month of work for a few days worth of food. In the midst of such chaos, the lives of women are literally a question of survival.

"...if war boosts the economy of the industrial nations that own the war supplies, it smashes the economy of the nations that consume them."

WOMEN AND WAR

When we talk about the effects of war on the Iranian women, not only do we mean those already poor or of the lower classes, but also the recently impoverished middle classes and even upper middle classes. In a general categorization, we can say that Iranian women fall into two major groups: urban women and rural women (which include village and tribal women). The latter form the majority of the female population and are an important element in the rural economy, but they are at the same time still far more under-privileged than their urban sisters. Socially and economically they are completely dependent on the man in the family, be he husband or son. They work on the farm and in rural factories producing foodstuffs and hand-made goods, but earn nothing for themselves in exchange for their labor. Their income is invisible and goes or adds to the property of the family which ultimately belongs to the husband or children. If a woman is divorced, she receives nothing. If her husband dies, she receives one-eighth of the cash and household—if there is any at that



economic level. She has no right to the land or farm. As for the house, the price of the land must be deducted, and she receives one-eighth of the building price, which, in the rural context, means a pile of *kah-gel* (mud mixed with straw used as building material). And she is illiterate.

Although illiteracy is a structural phenomenon in rural Iran, it is far more widespread among women than among men. According to the last available statistics gathered in 1975, 91% of rural women are illiterate. By now, since there has been no effort made to change this situation, the figures must be close to 100%.

As a sub-effect of her illiteracy, a woman remains virtually unskilled apart from the nontransferable, unrecognized hard work she does on the farm. All of this aggravates her extreme vulnerability to the slightest economic change within the family. The high number of deaths, injuries and unemployment caused by the war, particularly considering that one man's responsibility may extend to his mother and sisters as well as his wife and daughters, causes hardship to an immense number of women. Moreover, it is an unfortunate fact that Iran lacks any kind of social security or welfare system apart from that which the family itself provides. The few private charitable organizations that exist are hard pressed to do much more than provide very superficial relief to a lucky few under such adverse circumstances. The question, then, is what happens to the unskilled, illiterate woman who loses her husband and/or eldest son to the war?

WOMEN'S OPTIONS

In order to survive, a woman has few options. If she is very fortunate she can remarry. For most though, polygamy, prostitution, servitude, or beggary are the most common solutions.

Polygamy was outlawed in Iran in

1967 by the Family Code. But a few months after Khomeini took power, the Family Code was abolished, and polygamy is now officially recognized and even forcefully recommended by the regime. "Polygamy is beneficial to women," said Khomeini the day he repealed the Code. The grave nature of women's situation because of the war is used by the regime to propagate the idea of polygamy. Committees have been organized to manage these marriages, and monetary incentives are offered to men to encourage them to marry war widows.

Prostitution is another phenomenon that has increased as a reflection of the war time economic situation. The regime claims that prostitution was eradicated as it was anti-Islamic behavior. But the fact is that even though the brothels have been closed and prostitution is prohibited in its conventional sense, a different kind of prostitution, which might be called the Mullah's religious prostitution, is taking place. Sanctioned by the regime and thus in many ways more forcible, this version of prostitution is named "temporary marriage." It is a verbal or written contract between a man and a woman before sexual intercourse based on two factors: the woman's price and the duration of the so-called marriage. The period can be anywhere from one hour to several years during which time the woman has no economic or moral claims on the man whatsoever. There is no need for formal divorce in this marriage since it expires automatically when the term of agreement has elapsed. Finally, the number of "temporary wives" a man can have is not limited, and since it is categorized as "marriage," it must be both respected and accepted by Iranian women.

Today, it isn't only war widows who are victimized by polygamy and prostitution, but also their young daughters who find themselves faced with the same struggle for survival. In the Mullah's opinion, girls can be married as soon as they reach maturity which, in their view, is from age nine or the first menstruation. Moreover, the increasing shortage of young men along with the deepening poverty of the peasantry has revitalized the "old-man young-girl" pattern of marriage. It's not uncommon to find a 70 or 80 year old man with a wife that could be his youngest granddaughter.

THE KEYS TO HEAVEN

Finally, amidst economic ruin and the hopelessness of having almost nowhere to turn for help, there is the final horrifying blow to mothers of having their adolescent sons "recruited" to clean minefields. The survival rate for this particular military job is very low and it has already claimed the lives of 50,000 youngsters between the ages of 12 and 18.

When confronted by outraged international opinion, Khomeini denies everything calling the allegations of "suicide missions" imperialist slander against the Islamic government. In Iran, however, his rhetoric is, "The blood of our children washes the sins from our land." To the boys ready to leave for the war, his message is that their lives in the material world are pointless,

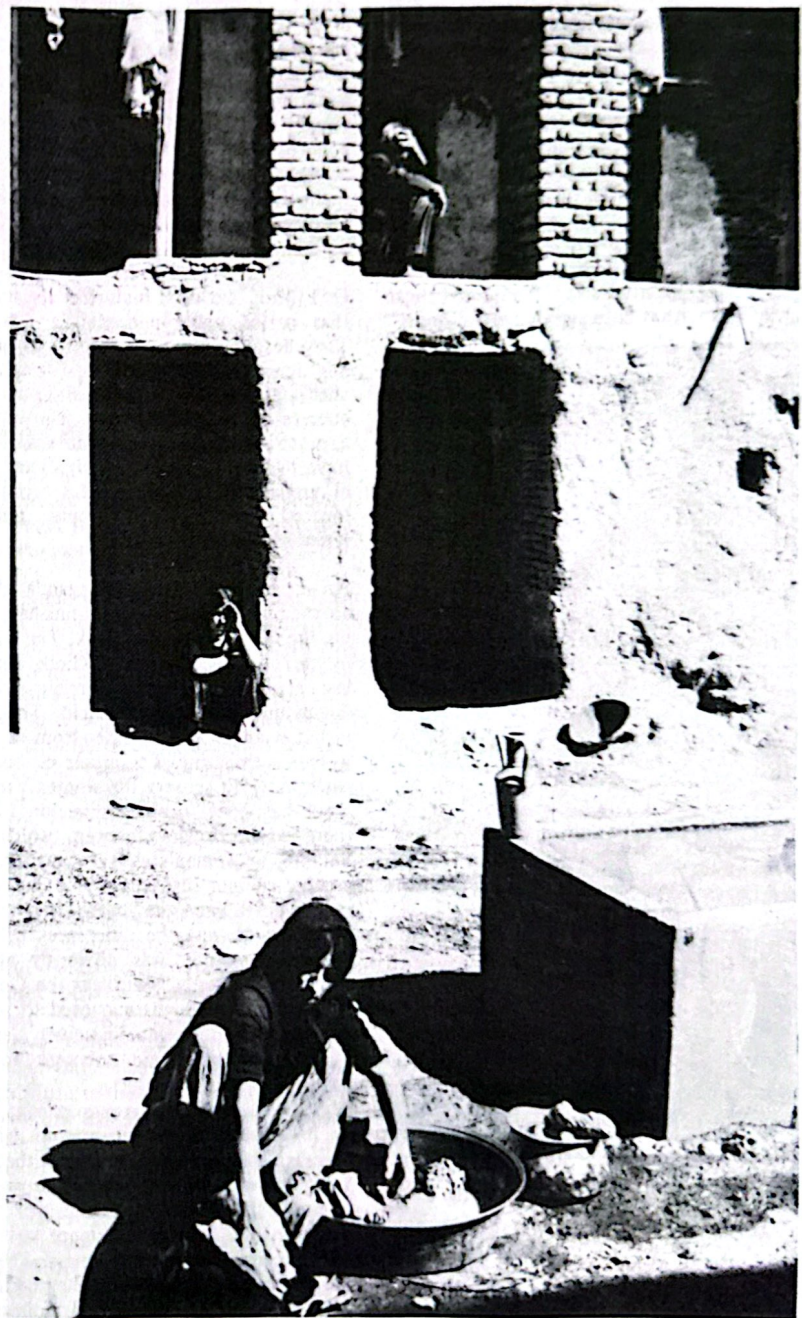
that they are being given the opportunity to go to heaven, and that being killed in the war is the direct way to heaven. They are even given an actual key to wear around their neck so that they'll be able to open heaven's door. Their brainwashing is so thorough that if captured, the boys don't want to go home. Having promised to die for Khomeini, they are ashamed to be alive.

Since most of these children come from peasant and lower class families that have very likely already lost one or more males to the war, the mother may be desperate and ignorant enough to believe that she shares heaven with her sons and husband if she encourages and supports the recruitment of her family. Indeed, she has no other choice; after all, the war is for Islam and God, and resistance means execution.

The war between Iran and Iraq has had a disastrous impact on the Iranian society as a whole but for women in particular, it has been especially catastrophic. For an illiterate, unemployed, and already impoverished woman whose life and welfare are delicately balanced between the fragile security of absolute dependence on her men folk on one hand and complete ruin or even death on the other, any fluctuation can be devastating. Faced with the economic ravages of war and the heartbreak of the loss of both her husband and sons, not even all the keys of heaven could give her hope or restore the pieces of her broken life. □

Further reading:

• *"In the Shadow of Islam: the Women's Movement in Iran"* by Tabari Yeganeh, Zed Press, London, 1982.



Woman washing clothes in a village near Shiraz, 1980.

Mary Hooglund/Merip

Germany Silence Means Approval

So far little has been written on daily life during the Nazi years. Ruth Strege, a young woman as the Nazis came to power, was like many Germans at the time in that she wished to continue her life as normally as possible. Born in 1914, Strege studied art history, history and journalism at Humboldt University in Berlin and received her Ph.D. in 1942. She managed to live through the hardships created by war by ignoring not only the situation, but also the 1,000,000 people who were actively resisting the Nazis. Her decision to remain detached was consistent with the efforts of Nazi propaganda.

We present this interview with her to give an example of how propaganda was used then and is still used to this day to integrate women into the war apparatus. We think it is essential to recognize that just because women do not take an active role during wartime does not mean that they are not contributing to the war effort. As Ulrike Meinhof said: "How could those who know what is happening stand back?"



Courage

"After 1939-1940, one had to choose between full acceptance or open resistance which not many women could manage—I couldn't."

(Translated and excerpted from *Freiburger 2—Theme: Women in Society*, "Let's talk About the Background of a Woman," an interview with Ruth Strege conducted by Thomas Schmidt, Freiburger Verlag/Verlag Klaus Wagenbach 1979, Berlin, West Germany.)

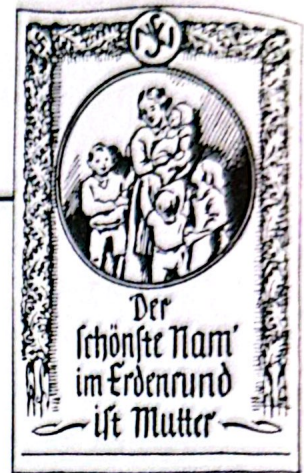
Q: You were aware of what was happening in 1933 when the Nazis came to power...

Ruth Strege: What do you mean by "aware?" I was quite young and was living in the country. I had finished high school just one year before the so-called "change of power." Only a few people realized what was going to happen; only those who were directly involved. Even very experienced politicians said that "once the Nazis gain power, they'll adjust to reality; most of them are too stupid and uneducated to become dangerous..." But it turned out differently.

Q: I think that most historical accounts of that period make one glaring mistake. They describe Nazi propaganda as stupid and ignorant, as an obvious fraud, but such arguments don't explain the massive success that the Nazis had. You have to approach it from a different angle; you have to take history seriously. That kind of propaganda was successful because it touched something in people, touched latent ideas and desires.

A: In regards to the propaganda efforts directed toward women, I just finished reading the newly re-released book, *The Woman in the Third Reich* by Scholz-Klinik, a group leader of Nazi Women. Terribly written, but by no means entirely stupid. The book includes an original article from a Nazi women's magazine. The article claims that since the 19th century the women's movement has gone in three directions. First, there is the Anglo-American, which was fighting for women's equality and for their acceptance into institutions and the world of business. Then the Marxist movement, which by denying the differences between men and women was obviously against women. And lastly, there was the German movement, which was supposed to be the only one which considered women's special essence and which did not seek equality between the sexes.

I am sure that this propaganda, based on this type of argument, was not without success. They did not tell women that they would have to leave their families in order to prove themselves in the business world and that their previous existence was based only on limitations and dullness. The propaganda instead gave this existence uncommon attention. Liberated and independent women did not approve of the Nazi



The most beautiful name in the entire world is mother.

women's program. But there was a tremendous number of oppressed women. The Nazi propaganda directed its attention directly to two groups which were not doing too well: the workers in the factories and the women with children.

The propaganda was effective because both groups heard daily that "we [the Nazis] are nothing without you, you are fundamental." This was music to the ears of the women and the workers. Even committed Communists turned around. The mass of unemployed workers, who had felt very anonymous, suddenly felt that someone was personally approaching them.

I don't think it's correct to say that Nazi propaganda was stupid just because today we find it so. The Nazis tried to imbue women with more worth. Suddenly they were the "Mothers of the Coming Generation," the "Comrades of their Husbands," the "Bulwark of All that's Good and Beautiful," and these phrases meant something to them. It made it possible for women to step outside the family circle. They were given a place in society. But what kind of society? You see, the organization which tried to put a bridle on an entire nation was fast becoming more and more prevalent. The Nazis were looking for people with "leadership characteristics" (a nice sounding phrase) and they extended their search to include the ranks of women.

There was a tremendous number of posts to be filled—there was the German Girls' Association, the Women's Group, the Female Volunteer Service, the Women's Management Group, the Girls' Sport Group and so on. And there one could see how an ordinary housewife became a concentration camp guard.

It was a clever trick to satisfy a long neglected need for acknowledgement. The women did not earn one more right than they had had, nor did the workers earn any more money than they had had. But the two of them were placed on pedestals for all to see. Think about an overworked woman with a lot of kids and about a poorly paid piece worker. Suddenly both are allowed to take a ride on the great white Nazi ship "Wilhelm Gustoff" for their very first vacation!

And there were always slogans



Courage

emphasizing the German worker (who was different from the English worker), a German woman (a German woman doesn't smoke) and especially an expectant mother.

Suddenly, all German women's children were counted. If a woman had four, that meant better seats at all events, and the men would jump from their seats in the streetcars. Five children meant a "Mother's Cross." However, no one got pregnant just to get one, which sheds some light on women's attitudes. The Nazi propaganda wasn't that convincing.

As it was expected that a woman thought like her husband, her participation in Nazi organizations was seen as a reflection of her husband's politics. So a lot of women joined Nazi organizations because otherwise the family could be arrested or harassed.

After 1939-1940, one had to choose between full acceptance or open resistance which not many women could manage—I couldn't. Under cover you could still do some things, like obtain food stamps and shelter for Jewish women who were not registered. When I look back at my friends, I have to say that there were more women who could cope with the situation and survive. They made themselves invisible in Berlin. The men were more in danger because often they wouldn't face the facts. Their resistance would start with words only.

Q: War is conceptualized by some people

as an awful adventure. Now there are many people who like to talk about the war. Would you say these are only the soldiers who saw action?

A: Everyone who escaped the danger talks about it with excitement. I don't think anything can be more cruel than war and, of course, the men also experienced it like that. But on the other hand, if you happened to escape, you were lucky. You began to think that this was your personal success. The further you got from all the awful events, the more you pushed that part away and tried to forget, then the more you began to remember only the positive experiences.

And it was nice for a lot of men to get rid of their wives for a while and to be able to be with men. And the opposite is also true—not all of the women were sad to get rid of their husbands for a while. And war was not continuous in Berlin; sometimes there were breaks. A lot of dangerous situations became more and more routine and they caused less fear. People started to live with the war; they lived with the bombs and sirens. Pretty soon people figured out how to protect themselves. I myself stayed in Berlin because a big city seemed safer than a little village.

Another thing is also true—people never celebrated as much as in war time, not before and not after. The women hung out together. After the warning was over, when they had figured out how their friends

had fared, and after they had nailed the cardboard to the windows, they would meet. We had survived again; we talked, laughed, fooled around. There was always alcohol around. We lived and that was reason enough to celebrate.

Q: How was it when the Russians came into Berlin?

A: Apart from the heavy fighting in the downtown area, it was easier than outside the city. There were a lot of rumors about rape, but I think the men were in more danger at the time. For example, day after day the Russians led the prisoners through the town. If the prisoners were Berliners, they might try to escape, and some would succeed. But if the numbers came up short, they would take anybody from the street.

News spread quickly [about the indiscriminate snatchings] and the streets were empty; no men were in sight, not even old men. Only women risked being out of their houses. So it was the women who soon went to work—they were called the "rubble women." First, all women with Nazi backgrounds were put to work, but not only them. There were women who did this kind of heavy work as an atonement, like this friend of mine, who wasn't really strong enough to carry the stones.

The women started to work without a lot of words. Nobody had to pressure them. The "rubble women" said that it had to be cleaned up. Clean-up is an old woman's job. But this was also a very important experience because you suddenly realized that you could do heavy physical work. When you saw the piles of rubble, you couldn't believe it possible to clean them up with your bare hands. There were no wheelbarrows, no tools. They cleared the side walks. It was due to the women's efforts that soon there were sidewalks in Berlin.

At the end of the war the black market thrived in Berlin and that was of course a new experience—that you as a woman can work hard, that is well known, but in general there was the consensus that women were too stupid to understand the principles of business. And very suddenly the women realized that they could bargain and cheat and trade and that they could even deal with the Americans. At first things went quite smoothly, but all of a sudden they became very dangerous once men took over the market. The market had changed; gangsters showed up. This violence drove women from the market. □

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- "Women, Fascism and Everyday Life," by Elisabeth Daeumer, *Off Our Backs*, Nov. 1983.
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Besides "labor and service for the nation," women were assigned another important duty: giving birth to more of "the Emperor's subjects."

On the Wrong Side

Japan

(From *Feminist*, an English-language feminist annual from Japan, 1980.)

The years between 1937, when Japan launched an all-out war against China, until Japan's defeat in 1945 have come to be called a "dark valley" for the Japanese women's movement. A variety of organizations flourished in the liberal atmosphere of the 1920's during

period has been limited.

The subservience of the women's movement to the power structure during the War was not only due to conservatives in such groups as the Women's Patriotic Society or the Women's Defense Society, both of which were actively promoted by the government. Many liberal women leaders active during the 1920's also went along with the government and its military

been succeeding. But now war had begun in earnest. We had to choose whether to oppose the war directly and go to prison, or to completely withdraw from public activity, or to accede to realities for the time being and cooperate to some extent."

It can be said that this dilemma was shared not only by women's movement leaders but also by many other Japanese intellectuals during the war. Their "to some extent" cooperation could and did easily turn into full cooperation.

Around this time the women's suffrage movement had already come to a standstill, and the Suffrage Conference of 1937 was to be the last. In 1938, its name was changed to the Provisional Women's



World War II propaganda poster with the poem "Song of the Women's Frontier Army."

which the number of women workers rose dramatically. But as the war with China escalated, the women's movement burned low, and did not revive itself until after the end of World War II. Thus, the war era is usually considered a blank period in the movement's history and it has been little studied.

However, it is wrong to say that there was no women's movement in Japan during the War; it was only that there were no organizations actively working for what we would now call women's liberation. In short, various types of organized women's activities were suppressed by the government, and those left were almost all cooperating with the power structure. As research on women's history has tended to disregard the right-wing trends of the women's movement, study of the wartime

policies. We may well ask why such women, who had displayed superior intellectual and critical powers and who had worked to raise women's status in pre-war Japan, ended up cooperating with an aggressive war effort.

"From the standpoint of women, we firmly oppose the present rise of fascism." This statement was adopted by the Third National Women's Suffrage Conference in 1932 against a background of increasing fascism. But their anti-fascism or anti-war stand did not last long. Five years later, Ichikawa Fusae, the leader of the women's suffrage movement, wrote as follows: "Seeing the progress of total war in China, I was seized with deep sorrow. Until then, I had declared opposition to the war as much as possible, and attacked the military. Going along with official policies on local government, we felt that in some ways we had

A Song of the Women's Frontier Army

Women and girls
Prepare for the "Victory"
Pray for the guns fighting on the battlefield
The pure Japanese-blooded woman
It is the moment of blossoming.

Conference. The participants were much the same as in other years, but the content of the meeting was different. Its slogans were "Arise in the Autumn mobilization!" and "Nothing is built without women's help." Furthermore, it adopted the following resolution: "We women cannot find words to express our gratitude to all the Emperor's soldiers, who continue to achieve such a brilliant record abroad in the face of unspeakable hardships, for the sake of peace in Asia...Today in the midst of this long war, we earnestly desire to be strong in our duty." Thus, the sentiments expressed by the formerly liberal women's groups had become hardly distinguishable from those of the Women's Patriotic Society or the Women's National Defense Society, which had been nationalistic and pro-establishment from the start.

As the war went on and a labor shortage occurred, industries inevitably tried to use more women. Employment of women in mines, which had been forbidden by law in 1933, was revived in 1939. That same year the government published a directive entitled "On the Employment of Women Workers in Accord with Fulfilling the Labor Mobilization Plan." This said that women applicants for work should be recruited at

employment bureaus throughout Japan, that women should be actively encouraged to work in heavy industries, and that women should be used to fill positions left vacant by men who had gone to the front.

In 1940 the Law on Youth Hiring Restrictions came into force, and this banned the use of youths between the ages of 12 and 20, including women, in non-essential production—so that they could be used in the munitions industry. With the increase in women workers came the Law on the Initial Wages for Inexperienced Female Labor. These wages were considerably lower than men's. From 1941, labor service was required under the law for men aged 14 to 40 and women aged 14 to 25. Then in 1943 the Law on Factory Work Time Limitation was revoked, so that there were no controls on night shifts. Severe shortages of labor and materials worsened until the 1945 defeat.

Besides "labor service for the nation," women were assigned another important duty: giving birth to more of "the Emperor's subjects." The government, fearing a population drop as the war dragged on, approved a Motherhood Protection Law in 1937. This provided aid according to need, for educational, medical, and daily living expenses to poor mothers with children under the age of 13. The Motherhood Protection League, a separate group under the League to Gain Women's Suffrage, had campaigned for such a law for three years. The fact that this goal was attained comparatively quickly, while the long years of campaigning for women's suffrage had produced no result, shows how concerned the government was over the population question.



Japanese women sent to foreign countries to be war brides.

Since Japan's infant mortality rate was high compared to those in Western countries, pregnancy handbooks were distributed in 1942 to help protect the health of mothers and children. Early marriages and many births were encouraged under the slogan, "Let's have children, let's increase!" The authorities favored lowering the legal age for marriage by three years, with each



Reunion of Japanese mothers who risked their lives during the war talking about their experiences.

couple having an average of five children. Mothers having many sons were awarded commendations. Women were excused from compulsory labor service at times of child-bearing and nursing. But their children could not be promised a bright future. On the contrary, women were told their children were not their own property but the Emperor's, and so their sons must later be sent away joyfully, as the Emperor's soldiers.

For the execution of policy toward women, the government made use of prominent women leaders. Before the war, of course, the government had only rarely used women in the auxiliary bodies of government or in regional public organizations. But this string of new appointments must have meant that the government felt it advantageous to use influential women leaders to attain certain goals. Having turned sharply to the right, women's leaders were already prepared to go along with government requests for cooperation.

As the Pacific War began, all Japan's political parties were finally dissolved, along with such women's groups as the League to Gain Women's Suffrage and the Women's Political Participation League. A new federation, the Greater Japan Women's Association, was formed through a merger of the Women's Patriotic Society, the Women's National Defense Society and the Greater Japan Federated Women's Society. It was surely no accident that the government named as the new group's founders—along with women from the Imperial family, the nobility and the wives of high-ranking officers—those women who had been appointed to head the government women's committees.

Since Japanese women at long last were appearing to be treated as full citizens while being used to replace men during wartime, the women's movement leaders clearly felt this was some kind of progress. There were even a few who were dissatisfied that the government did not draft women the same way it did men.

However, Japanese women were in fact granted no new rights at all during the war. Even though they began to hold jobs

in banks, railroads and heavy industries, which before had gone only to men, working conditions were deplorable. Accident rates increased sharply, as were only to be expected when women were made to work in jobs requiring strength and close attention even though they had insufficient training and poor nourishment.

In short, women who had been kept at home in the name of "protecting the home" were suddenly forced to help support an aggressive power structure in the name of "protecting the nation." This was neither progress nor liberation. Believing that it was, however, was the women's movement's basic mistake during the war. This delusion could be built only on another delusion—that of calling aggression abroad a holy war in defense of the homeland.

Women are often said to be innocent victims of war. It is true that in all aspects of society men have made the major decisions and carried out the major activities. War is no exception; men have decided to start wars, taken up weapons, and invaded other countries. Yet it is wrong to say that women are simply dragged into war as helpless victims. Even if they do not take up weapons and kill, as long as they cannot check aggression on the part of their own nation, as long as they give tacit approval, women are as guilty as men. They cannot evade responsibility.

Inevitably the postwar Japanese women's movement was closely bound up with the new peace movement, but women were long unable to rid themselves of the idea that they were merely war's victims. Most just proclaimed that they were sick of wars that dragged off their husbands, sons and fathers. They showed no understanding for the Chinese women assaulted and killed by these same husbands, sons and fathers, or for the Korean women rounded up to serve as army prostitutes. It took nearly 30 years, into the 1970's, for Japanese women to realize that the women of an aggressive country are victims as well as aggressors. □

Further Reading:

- "Women Do Not Allow War." in *Connexions* #6, Fall 1982.

Central America: An Overview

"We have to anticipate the partition of Central America. Such a development would then force us to man a new military front line of the East-West conflict right here on our continent."—Fred Ikle, U.S. Undersecretary of Policy for Defense, Sept. 12, 1983.

(This introduction was written by *Connexions* and compiled from our contacts with activists and their publications. This brief history highlights the background of the current situation in Central America.)

There are three wars being fought in Central America: in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Although the oppression and resistance in each country parallel one another, each has an indigenous struggle with a distinct history. All, however, are familiar with U.S. intervention, whether it be direct or covert.

Guatemala

In 1954, the CIA sponsored a coup overthrowing the democratically elected reformist president Jacobo Arbenz, accusing him of being a Communist. A military government was installed, and the history of Guatemalan governments has subsequently been a series of military dictatorships interrupted by military coups, all with horrifying human rights records.

Like most Latin American countries, Guatemala's land and wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small oligarchy strongly influenced by the U.S.-based multinationals with whom they do business. Recently, vast deposits of oil were found in Guatemala, thus increasing U.S. interest in the region. Guerrilla organizations had been operating in Guatemala, but by 1969 had been almost completely wiped out. In the early '70s, new groups began to form which united in 1982 in a coalition called URNG: Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. Many Indians have joined the guerrillas due to growing attacks and massacres by the U.S.-trained Guatemalan Army.

General Mejía Victores' government is preparing for elections in March 1984. The increase in murders and kidnappings, the threats against political parties, especially the Christian Democrats, as well as the expanding violence against the general population place doubt on the effectiveness of elections.

El Salvador

The current struggle in El Salvador dates back to 1931, when the military prevented the democratically elected reformist president Araujo from taking office. A popular insurrection rose up, resulting in



30,000 dead. José Napoleon Duarte, the Christian Democrat president of the military-civilian junta of 1980, described El Salvador's history: "For 50 years, a few rich have used the army to control the government through force and electoral fraud." (*Oakland Tribune*, Mar. 21, 1982.)

The U.S. has never directly intervened in El Salvador, but has supported a number of coups. The 1979 "reformist" coup overthrowing the brutal dictator, General Romero, escalated the conflict. Since 1979, the U.S. has given or loaned nearly one billion dollars in aid to El Salvador, a radical increase from the preceding years. Forty thousand people have been killed, 80% of whom have died at the hands of the right-wing death squads which have military and government officials as members. In 1980, the opposition (Social Democrats, ex-Christian Democrats, and the mass organizations of the five guerrilla groups) united politically to form the FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front). The guerrilla fighters united in the FMLN (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation) forming the military wing of the FDR. They control three main regions and pockets of areas in El Salvador.

Right now, elections are scheduled for March 1984. The Reagan administration hails this as a great leap forward for democracy. The guerrillas in the FDR-FMLN are calling instead for a provisional government to be set up with their inclusion. This would enable the guerrillas and their supporters to participate in future elections without fear of reprisals from the mil-

itary and the military-sanctioned right-wing death squads. This is acceptable neither to the government nor to the Reagan administration.

Nicaragua

The U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912-1933, leaving only after installing the Somoza family, one of the most corrupt and bloody regimes in the Americas. From 1927-1932 Nicaraguans rebelled, led by Augusto Cesar Sandino, an anti-imperialist. Although crushed, this insurrection was never forgotten. The FSLN (Sandinista Front for National Liberation) formed in the 1960s, and by the mid-'70s, workers, peasants, shopkeepers, businessmen, professionals, students, women and segments of the Catholic Church were organized by the FSLN to fight the dictatorship. On July 19, 1979, the 45-year-long Somoza dictatorship was overthrown.

The U.S. has labeled the FSLN totalitarian, although elections are scheduled for 1985 and may occur in 1984. The U.S. has also accused the FSLN of arms shipments to the guerrillas in El Salvador, and thus of exporting revolution. However, Fr. Miguel D'Escoto, Nicaragua's Foreign Minister, explained that the U.S. has found no verifiable proof of either of these claims. In fact what the Reagan administration fears is that Nicaragua, having overthrown a U.S.-supported dictator through national insurrection, will meet the aspirations of its people, thus giving hope to other liberation struggles in Latin America.

U.S. Interference

Nicaragua is still at war against the counter-revolutionaries (contras) who are receiving covert military aid from the U.S. and who operate out of Honduras. The U.S. is training Honduran soldiers to fight the FMLN liberated zones along the Salvadoran-Honduran border. The Honduran army also seeks skirmishes with the Nicaraguan army that would justify increased U.S. military aid. Recently Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador formed CONDECA (the Central American Defense Council) to provide military support if one of them goes to war. This is a U.S.-inspired attempt to legitimize the "pacification" of Nicaragua and the guerrillas in El Salvador and Guatemala. Thus, if Honduras goes to war with Nicaragua, then CONDECA forces could intervene and request U.S. intervention as happened in Grenada. There are 5000 U.S. troops stationed in Honduras. □

We are very Sandinista. My father is rather old so he didn't participate directly. He helped with money, or if the army needed a vehicle to go somewhere, he lent them his.

Q: During the Revolution when Somoza was still in power and the forces were fighting the Somocistas and the National Guard, how did you participate?

A: I collaborated with and helped the FSLN, lending economic support where I could within my situation, since I was a student. Sometimes I served as a mail carrier, and in my house at night there were FSLN meetings to plan the work in which I took part. The time that I studied was the most difficult period at the universities: strikes, work stoppages, political mobilizations, all of this was awakening the political consciousness of the students. The majority of the students at this time were quite combative, and many currently have great respon-

sibility. I hid the letters in my underwear, for example, in order not to be discovered or stopped by the [National] Guard. They went through briefcases, books, they touched your body, and well, there were people who ate their messages if the *Guardia* succeeded in capturing them. It was quite dangerous. But the people did it.

Q: If the National Guard suspected a woman of doing such work would they leave her alone more often than they would a man?

A: The repression and persecution were the same for men as for women. There were many elderly women who carried mail, and even they were not respected.

Q: How did the older women participate?

A: Everyone was working. For example, mothers of Sandinistas participated. I know a woman whose son died in a massacre in 1971 at the university. From that time on she worked with the Sandinista Front, delivering mail, her house was used as a "safe" house, and there were meetings in her house of the major leaders of the FSLN including Carlos Fonseca Amador [a founder of the FSLN who was killed in 1976]. She also did international work, carrying mail. A very active señora. She didn't take up the gun because she was elderly, but she did great work. She dedicated her life to the fight.

Q: Has U.S. interference in Nicaragua hurt the revolution?

A: Yes. But even though the problems are more difficult, the revolution is going to survive because the people are ready to die to defend the revolution... everybody is. Of course it's a big problem because the forces that could be put to work in other areas are defending the country or going through military training. But the revolution is going to survive.

Q: What is the role of AMNLAE [Asociación de Mujeres Nicaraguenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza]—Nicaraguan Women's Association?

A: It's a mass organization of women so that women can participate actively in the construction and consolidation of the revolution. It is named for the first militant Sandinista woman who fell in combat in 1971. In the past, the organization was called AMPRONAC—Women's Association Confronting the Nation's Problems. It was formed in 1977 to integrate all Nicaraguan women in the struggle. Its work and objectives have changed with the situation. AMNLAE's work concentrates on encouraging women to participate in the revolution such as on the political and cultural levels. AMNLAE also distributes food and does "vigilancia," or guard-duty, gives out birth control information and helps prepare women who are pregnant with information on what to eat, how to care for the baby, etc.



Margaret Randall/Sandino's Daughters

In December 1979, the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Nicaraguan Women's Association held its first national assembly, attended by women from all over the country. [The banner reads: "The women of Masaya are present in the Sandinista Revolution."]

Interviews:

"I think the revolution is going to survive because the people are ready to die to defend the revolution..."

Nicaragua

(The following interview with "Rosa," a Nicaraguan woman visiting the Bay Area, was conducted by Teri Gruenwald for *Connexions*.)

Q: When did you begin to work politically?

A: I began in 1976-77. My family took part in the revolution, and is still participating.

sibilities within the government. The participation was incredible. For example, the demonstrations which started at the university were at times 50 blocks long, and they would go to the rest of the people urging them to join in. Everyone participated.

Q: What was the atmosphere like? Were you afraid?

A: Of course. The situation was intense. People were afraid of doing those little jobs which were also important in the struggle, because the work was not just along the combatant lines. One could participate in a variety of important ways. If this work wasn't completed—the mail delivered—the rest of the operation could not have possibly worked. And of course it was very difficult and very risky to carry the FSLN's internal communication from one place to another. I wasn't afraid because I always



Q: Does AMNLAE specifically discuss women's liberation in its meetings?

A: Of course. In all of the meetings, nationally, in the barrios, the blocks, they always talk of women's liberation. Inside the revolutionary process equality between men and women has been established through all the struggles: economic, political, social.

Q: In El Salvador there are all-women battalions. Does this exist in Nicaragua?

A: Yes, there are many battalions that are exclusively made up of and directed by women. In almost every city in Nicaragua, there are women's battalions. They are called Reserve Battalions. And there are still women in the Armed Forces.

Q: Who are the contras?

A: The U.S. press talks about the counter-revolutionaries, only by naming those who were with the state or had some relationship with the FSLN, like Chamorro or Edén Pastora (Commander Zero) for example. What they don't say is that almost all counter-revolutionaries are ex-National Guards. Well, in Nicaragua, everyone knows this. Internationally, this isn't so well known because those who worked with the Front are made to seem like people who weren't in agreement with the revolution, and consequently left. But really they are united with the ex-National Guard that assassinated, repressed, killed, raped, robbed. The Nicaraguan people are very clear about this.

Q: Do women take up arms and fight with the contras?

A: I know of no woman that works with the counter-revolutionaries, but probably there are women, the wives of the ex-Guardsmen doing some type of work such as cooking, but really I have never heard of a woman

fighting with guns with the counter-revolutionaries.

Q: When the contras succeed in entering a village or town in Nicaragua, what happens?

A: I was in a town that borders Honduras in the northern zone of Chinandega, where they have a scandalous capacity for penetrating the country. It's incredible. They are protected by the Honduran army who lets them pass and then they retreat. The moment the Nicaraguans hear the shots, they sound an alarm and the people immediately begin to run. Everyone knows where to go and what to do. They know who is responsible, who takes care of food, etc. It's very well organized.

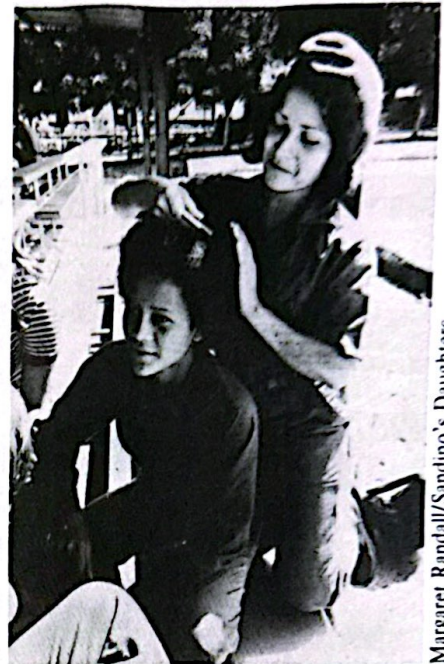
Q: Why is Honduras aiding the contras?

A: The United States and Honduras want to provoke Nicaragua to commit some indiscretion so that they can immediately justify requesting aid from the army, specifically intervention. The day on which you don't hear gunshots against the Sandinista positions on the border is a rare day. The Nicaraguan army is permanently forbidden to shoot or attack the counter-revolutionaries except in defense unless they receive orders from their superiors. I know this because I saw it. They only shoot to defend themselves. They aren't looking for any conflict with the Honduran government. The Honduran government has even penetrated Nicaraguan territory, and the Sandinista army made them retreat, although they didn't enter into direct combat with them.

Q: What about El Salvador?

A: We have the same enemy, of course. But we Nicaraguans know that we can best help the Salvadoran struggle by consolidating our Sandinista revolution and making Sandinista power stronger everyday. □

"...we Nicaraguans know that we can best help the Salvadoran struggle by consolidating our Sandinista revolution and making Sandinista power stronger everyday."



Margaret Randall/Sandino's Daughters

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- "Sweet Ramparts: Women in Revolutionary Nicaragua," by J. Deighton, Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign/War on Want Campaigns Ltd., 1983.
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- "Nicaraguan Women and the Revolution," from WIRES, 2700 Broadway, Rm. 7, New York, NY 10025.

Film:

- "Women in Arms," directed by Victoria Schultz, Hudson River Productions, 1897 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301.

Contact:

- Nicaragua Information Center, P.O. Box 1004, Berkeley, CA 94301.
- AMLA, Apartado A238, Managua, Nicaragua.

El Salvador

(Translated from *El Dia*, Mexican daily, March 7, 1983.)

In the hills of San Pedro, El Salvador one finds Silvia, the country's first all-women's battalion. It is part of the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), a military arm of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). Formed on December 22, 1981, the battalion is named in honor of Silvia, a Salvadoran guerrilla who was captured in August 1981 and subsequently assassinated by the paramilitary police of the Salvadoran regime.

A few months after its formation, Silvia defeated government troops in the Malacra Hills, a strategically important region. Apparently this elite, U.S.-trained squadron assumed an easy victory. As they laughingly advanced, they said: "They're only women. We're not faggots, are we?" "Charge!" The battle lasted seven days: the government troops suffered many casualties and was forced to retreat.

The following is an interview with Maria, the commanding officer of Silvia, translated from the September 1983 issue of *Courage*, a West German feminist monthly.

Q: Why are women fighting in their own battalion?

A: Women's units were formed in El Salvador to prove that women can contribute at all levels to the national liberation movement. This is a way to demonstrate within the ranks the struggle for women's rights and for equality with men. In this way a woman learns to develop all of her capabilities, intellectually, militarily, and politically, and can, therefore, succeed in all these areas.

Q: In Nicaragua, women at first fought within the military. Today, however, they remain predominantly in administrative positions within the army. Will Salvadoran women learn from this mistake?

A: One must take into consideration the fact that women in Nicaragua did not participate in the battle in the same way that women do in El Salvador. We have units made up of men and women, but we also have units in which only women fight. That is to say, women are involved in offensive as well as defensive actions. Therefore, they will remain in the army after the revolution, for they are an intricate part of the people's army. One must also realize that Salvadoran women have a very high consciousness, which is also very sensitive to the question of women's rights. We have been fighting for women's rights and have been members of women's organizations for a long time. What's happening right now is the logical continuation of women's struggle through different means.

Q: Describe the division of labor within the women's battalion. What is the leadership structure?

A: The women's military units have the same structure as other units. A military hierarchy exists with officers of different rank. But, the interrelationships within the women's units are very friendly, full of mutual support. We are against a sex-specific division of labor within the revolution. There must not be certain assignments for men, and other assignments for women. And from my experience I can tell you that women fulfill their assignments as well as men. When the enemy attacks, there is no distinction made between men and women. Therefore, for our self-defense, we need the same armaments.

Q: Why have you taken up arms?

A: Because all democratic solutions have been blocked. There is no other alternative left to us to free our people. We find ourselves in a war, not because we want war, but because war as the answer has been forced upon us. We have been fighting for 50 years against oppression, exploitation, hunger—for the realization of human rights. And our people finally said *enough* and took up arms, because we want a better world, because we want justice, freedom and respect for human life. □

Further Reading:

• "Women and War in El Salvador," from *WIRES*, 2700 Broadway, Rm. 7, New York, New York 10025.

arcello Melch Guerra/Courage

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Kampuchea

After Decades of War

Since the devastation wrought by the Pol Pot regime, the population of Kampuchea has changed dramatically to a clear majority of women...

In April 1975, after five years of U.S. bombing missions had nearly demolished Cambodia (renamed Democratic Kampuchea in 1976), Lon Nol's dictatorship was overthrown by Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge. Almost immediately, a large resettlement campaign took place, forcefully relocating people to communes scattered throughout the countryside. What followed were almost four years of starvation, forced labor and widespread executions. In January 1979, after an internal revolt weakened Pol Pot's regime, Vietnamese forces invaded Kampuchea and defeated the army.

Chanthou Boua, who was attending an Australian university when Pol Pot took power, was allowed to return to her native country (currently called the People's Republic of Kampuchea) in the summer of 1980. She stayed eight months working, traveling, and investigating the fate of her own family. The following is excerpted from a report which she began on that visit and completed in 1981.

From an early age, Khmer women have traditionally borne heavy responsibilities in society. At birth, a girl is sometimes looked upon as a burden to the family and as a cause for worry. For parents, a daughter can do many more things than a son to embarrass the family. A girl has even been compared to a piece of cotton, and a boy to a diamond. This means that if a diamond is dropped into mud, it can be picked up and washed as clean as before, while cotton, once dropped into the mud, can never be returned to its original purity no matter how much cleaning is done.

Today, there is still heavy societal pressure for a woman to behave in accordance with the wishes of the family. A nice girl is one who makes no sound when walking on a wooden floor. She is not to go out often when she becomes an adult, and is expected to do more work around the house than her brothers. Parents usually decide upon whom she is to marry and when they think it is the right time to do so.

But since the devastation wrought by the war and the Pol Pot regime, the population of Kampuchea has changed dramatically to a clear majority of women, posing many religious, cultural, social and

economic problems. Statistics gathered from villages in different parts of Kampuchea suggest that women are 60% of the present population, and an even higher percentage of the present labor force. Many are widows. Why did so many more women survive the Pol Pot period than men? From various interviews with people in different parts of Kampuchea, it appears that men were looked upon by the Khmer Rouge cadres as a more dangerous element to the survival of the regime. Men who had served in Lon Nol's army or administration, or men considered resisters were subject to greater suspicion and many were eliminated.

Kampuchean women usually have many children—at least four and sometimes as many as 12. On top of all these responsibilities, more women than ever have to earn a living. Khmer women are usually very reticent when talking about their status in the family, but today's burden is so striking that some come out and say that they are "the backbone of the family," a situation which they have never been in before.

Because so many women in Kampuchea today are widows with children to care for, some look for outside support by



About one-fourth of Prey Veng's residents were killed between 1975-79.



Chanthou Boua

becoming the mistress of a man who can offer them financial and social back-up. It is hard to blame them after the trauma they've been through; a bit of freedom and sexual excitement is needed to build a new life, especially if they are living in the city. "Men in the city are very cunning," one woman told me. "They know what we want and they offer it to us, and after a while we get sucked in."

In the countryside, the situation is somewhat different; there is more solidarity between women. They know one another better, and they can talk to each other every day while working side by side in the fields. In response to my questions as to whether there is any problem of men having two or three wives, a group of peasant women said: "No, a man can't feed two or three wives. It's hard enough to have one wife. In no way would we allow him to get away with that."

But I have met many Khmer women who have told me that there are simply no single men to choose from. If they want to get married, they have to marry somebody else's husband. One woman working with a foreign aid agency said to a relief worker: "I wish you would bring a shipload of men instead of food!" Things are especially difficult for unmarried women of around 30 years old. Some will never be able to marry, whether they want to or not. It is easier for young girls because there are more young men around.

There are also problems of unsatisfying marriages left behind by Pol Pot's administrators. During that time, there were many forced marriages; young men and women would be asked to attend a meeting and then forced to get married on the spot. Some were lucky enough to be married to someone they liked or came to like. Others were forced to live with it for two or three years and only now have the freedom to request a separation from their unchosen partners. But their problems

Erik Eriksson/Kommentar

don't end here and for women especially it is difficult to find another partner or to care for the children by themselves.

Finally, even many marriages that were entered into voluntarily during Pol Pot's time are in trouble. Because husbands and wives were often separated to perform tasks in different places, families were often kept apart for two or three months. They only saw each other for one or two days during job intervals before being taken elsewhere. As a result, couples didn't have the chance to cherish one another and many finally became fed up. When the Khmer Rouge victory came in April 1975, members of many families were in different places. Many were not allowed to rejoin their families before being forced to march out of the cities into different directions. Now with the freedom to travel and to look for relatives, many people have decided to remarry after having given up hope of finding their first spouse. However, there have been several cases where their first husbands or wives have finally reappeared causing serious family problems.

Besides separations, food was also the source of marital friction. In the communes the daily food ration during most of the year was as little as one can of rice per day divided between several people. Furthermore, everything that was grown had to be turned over to the communal kitchen; people were not allowed to eat food from their own gardens. As a result, when people had something to eat, they often hid it from their husbands, wives or children in order to avoid sharing it or being caught by Pol Pot's forces. Many will remain sorry for the

rest of their lives for such actions which destroyed family trust and solidarity. Even worse, these incidents have sometimes led to the desire for vengeance which has left many families in ruins.



Chanthou Boua

Besides the obvious material destruction and loss of lives, the Pol Pot years have left many scars and serious social problems. The traumas of this period have turned many women against society, against people. More and more often one hears women saying that they hate being alive or that they live just for the sake of their children. Suicide attempts by women are more frequent than those by men, especially among those who have lost their husbands or children. In Kampuchea today, one often hears widows talking obsessively about their lost husbands. Many women will never forget the moment when their husbands were taken away or were shot or clubbed to death.

Many women complain of how inefficient they are compared to earlier days. Managers complain about absent-minded and day-dreaming female employees. A peasant widow said: "I don't know what I'm doing or thinking of any more; sometimes I forget the pot of rice on the stove and leave it to burn." The horrifying experiences they underwent during the Pol Pot period have demoralized them, they've lost their self-esteem, as well as their confidence in others, and they feel they no longer have a role or any utility in society. Women seem to have been more affected than men, taking them longer to recover and to realize that they can make a valuable contribution to the current rebuilding of society. It is very important that Kampuchean women, at this particular time when they are in the majority and thus the main work force, are able to recognize their worth and fully participate in national reconstruction. □

Further Reading:

- "Women in Today's Cambodia," Chanthou Boua, *New Left Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1982.
- "Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays," David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan (ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 1983.
- "Kampuchea Survives...but what now?" *Southeast Asia Chronicle* #77, Feb. 1981.

Film:

- "Kampuchea After Pol Pot," produced by Australian Freedom From Hunger Campaign. Distributed by The Oceania Media Network Pty Ltd., 4 Goulburn St., Sydney N.S.W. 2000, Australia.

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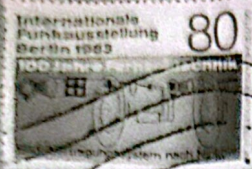


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Letters

Connexions

Dear *Connexions*,

I have enjoyed your magazine for some time now, and my appreciation of your efforts seems to increase with every quarterly. Over the issues, I have noticed a flexibility in the earlier polemical nature of your articles. You have included a translation of a story like "Umm Zahar," *Outrageous Women*, Summer 1983, poems from different parts of the world, and in your latest *Global Lesbianism II* a film review. This is very refreshing and effective as I feel that ideas which are expressed through the medium of any art, reach deeper into an audience than those expressed otherwise. I am not in any way depreciating the other 90% of your magazine, but hope that you will continue to include creative expressions by women.

Also, your issue *Culture Clash*, Spring 1983, had some very old references, 1967 for example, as in the article, "All the Work Was Shared." The same article used the term "African woman" as though there is such a generalized being. I suggest that if you must use references of this sort, then accompany them by some comments of your own. Or, if it is not your policy to do so, then use some academically sound sources.

Another thing, your latest issue did not have any article on lesbians in India. I understand that this may have been due to the fact that you couldn't possibly cover every country. But could it also have been due to the paucity of material from the sub-continent on that subject?

Thanks for provocative and enjoyable reading.

Sincerely,

Meera

[Ed. In *Global Lesbianism I*, Winter, 1982, we printed an article on young lesbians in India entitled "Bury Us Together". In *Creativity*, Spring, 1982, we included a movie review of the German lesbian film, *Mädchen in Uniform*.]

Dear *Connexions*,

Thanks for sending me the 10th issue of the magazine, *Global Lesbianism II*, Fall, 1983. I was very pleased with the way that rather rambling and disjointed interview I did with you actually turned out.

It was unfortunate that the picture of Baubo was used. At the time of my departure from Australia, that was actually an "in joke" applying to my situation there and the women I'd worked with...sigh! Well, never mind, you weren't to know, were you?

I would like to rectify an impression that may be erroneously created from my statement: "I recognised that I had no desire to relate in any way with men..." This is incorrect. What I really meant was that I no longer want to have heterosexual relationships. I do however, have some wonderful and precious friends who are male. Neither do I want it to be possible to infer that I am a "lesbian-separatist!"

I do also want to say how much I enjoy and appreciate the magazine, especially No. 9 on *Outrageous Women*. It is so inspiring to read about my fantastic and courageous sisters elsewhere.

Ta muchly.

Yours in love and support,

UMA

Dear Friends,

Many thanks for sending us your latest issue of *Connexions*, *Global Lesbianism II*. I want to congratulate you for the faithful translation [of the article "Zap Repression"], and the beautiful idea of your publication. You have succeeded in covering various aspects of the world situation for lesbians in a very clear manner. Our editorial staff is proud to have collaborated in such a noble work.

In solidarity,

Edgar Carrasco
Publicaciones Entendido
Apartado Postal 3873
Caracas 1010, Venezuela

Dear Sisters,

The First International Feminist Book Fair will be held in London on June 7, 8 and 9, 1984. The Book Fair is being organized by an autonomous group of women who are involved in all areas of the publishing business in this country. It will have a strong international involvement.

To ensure this we are currently compiling an extensive list of feminists involved

in all areas of book publishing throughout the world. We do hope that as many women as possible will be able to attend the Book Fair. We appreciate that some women have less access to money than others. Therefore, effort is being made here to raise money to be able to offer possible subsidies.

The Book Fair will be accompanied by related events such as readings, debates and workshops. It is planned that visitors from abroad may be able to recoupe some of their expenses by giving talks at Universities, Polytechnics and at women's centres throughout the UK.

Yours Sincerely,

Carole Spedding
for The Organizing Group
First International Feminist Bookfair
7 Loddon House
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Dear *Connexions*,

A friend of mine gave me issue #4 *Creativity*, Spring 1982. As I am interested in weaving, having made a trip to the highlands of Guatemala a few years ago, she thought I would like to read the article on that country in the issue.


I was, particularly so because of the conditions around Nebaj, where we were, and because of the appeal for help from American weavers in the bulletin of the American Friends Service Committee (*Spotlight*, Fall 1983).

We met many of these beautiful Indian women weavers and are appalled by the wanton destruction of their way of life and the complicity of our government in providing the means to do so. I feel a personal responsibility since I cannot forget their gracious welcome in sharing their craft, and making us feel as friends and family by their warmth and interest.

If only we could weave a chain around the world, perhaps peace would seem more attainable! I am enclosing a check for \$10 for a subscription to *Connexions*, which I found of great interest.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Leitman
Los Angeles



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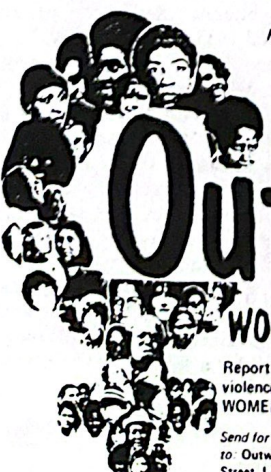
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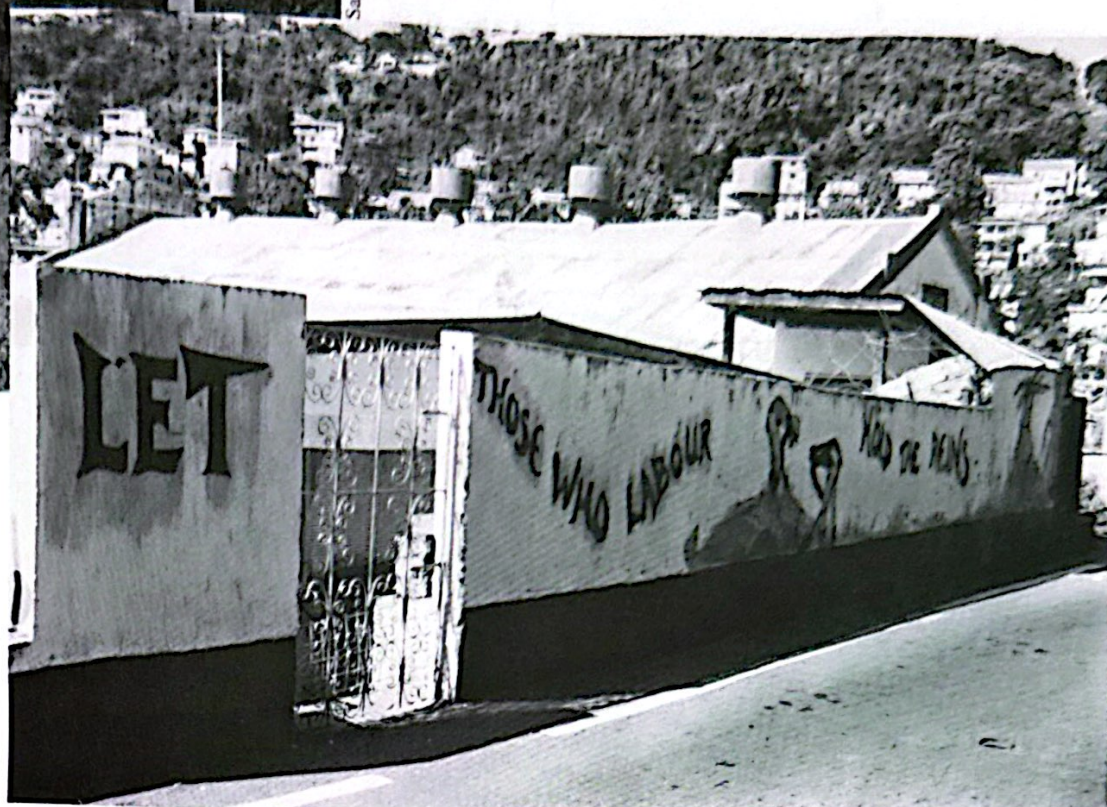
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