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# wri women



the  
newsletter  
of the  
women's  
working  
group of  
War Resisters  
International

## WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE

NEWS FROM CAMBODIA  
NEWS FROM EX-YUGOSLAVIA  
NOVEMBER 25TH: INTERNATIONAL DAY  
AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

WAR RESISTERS INTERNATIONAL  
55 DAWES STREET, SE17 1EL LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN

**Newsletter  
of the Women's Working Group  
of the War Resisters' International**

editor: Shelley Anderson

Lay-out: Françoise Pottier

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**Material for the next WRI Women's newsletter must be received by the end of February 1994.**

**Please send your articles, news, art work, etc. to the WRI office in London or to Shelley Anderson, van der Woudestraat 23, 1815 VT Alkmaar, the Netherlands.**

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**Write: WRI, 55 Dawes Street**

London SE17 1EL, Great Britain  
Tel: +44-71 703 7189  
Fax: +44-71 708 2545  
Giro account number: 58 520 4004

# NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is finally being recognized as the major international issue that it is. At the United Nations' Conference on Human Rights (held in Vienna this summer), the hard work of feminist organisers paid off. The final Declaration of the conference stated that violence against women--in both public and in private--is a human rights abuse. The Declaration also recommended that the UN appoint a Special Rapporteur on violence against women. (You can read excerpts from WRI's statement to the Conference against violence against women in the following pages). Women are now lobbying for the UN to fulfil its commitment to eliminate violence against women, and to report on its efforts to do so at the UN's international conference on women in Beijing, China, in September 1995 (a petition about this is enclosed).

The violence of war rapes throughout former Yugoslavia has also received much attention. While the danger is that this attention may be shortlived and sensationalized (and so victimize the survivors once again), it is a recognition of the devastation rape creates, and of the inextricable links between rape and war. You can read more about how women are resisting the violence in former Yugoslavia in the report from the WRI Women's meeting in Verona, and in a report about the visit of Stasa Zajovic (who many of you met at the WRI Women's Conference in Bangkok) with anti-militarist groups in the State of Spain (translated by MiX).

You can also read in the following pages how women in Cambodia are leading the struggle for democracy and peace in their country. All of this creates the hope that the undeclared war against women--the violence that takes place



in our homes, on our streets, at work, every day and in every country--will be made visible. This year, on November 25, groups around the world are again participating in the third annual International Day Against Violence Against Women. WRI members will also be commemorating this day with the "Name It" campaign--a campaign aimed at breaking the silence, and naming the violences that women in our different communities suffer and resist. You can contact the secretariat in London for more information about "Name It".

On another note, Caroline Pinkney-Baird left her position as staff member at the WRI office in London at the end of April. We thank her for all her hard work, both on the WRI Women's Conference and on other WRI projects, and wish her well.

Have you published a report about the Bangkok Conference? Or seen a report in your newspaper? Please send all articles about the 4th WRI Womens's Conference to: S. Anderson, van der Woudestraat 23, NL-1815 VT Alkmaar, the Netherlands

Shelley Anderson

# WRI Women Meet in Verona

by Maggie Helwig

The WRI Women's Working Group met in Verona, Italy, in July, for the first time since the intense--and exhausting--experience of the Women Overcoming Violence conference in Bangkok.

We were joined by four women from the independent feminist/peace movement in former-Yugoslavia--from Serbia, Stasa Zajovic, who was also in Bangkok, and Gordana Sevo, whom we met for the first time; and from Croatia, Gordana Obradovic and Slavica Kusic from the Centre for Women Victims of War. Half a dozen women from Verona's Women in Black also took part in some of the two-day meeting.

It was the situation of the Balkan women that generated the most political discussion. All four women made lengthy presentations to the meeting, discussing both the work they are doing to aid women war victims and to protest militarist government policies, and the analyses and understandings which they have developed through this work.

"I'm sick and tired of seeing women in war portrayed as victims," said Stasa. "I mean, they have suffered, it's true. But the image of victim just becomes a collaboration with our oppression ... All you hear is women and children, women and children, they have to go to war to defend the women and children."

"Women's bodies are here to serve the men's world," added Gordana Sevo. "We never asked them to fight for territory for us, but because they do, they think we owe them our bodies, they consider it our responsibility to the nation to give them our bodies."

Stasa also talked about some of the ambiguities in the roles women have played. In the early months of the war, almost all the men who came to the Anti-War Centre as COs or deserters came with women--"though many of them were probably beating these women," says Stasa, who was working on the SOS Telephone line and at the Anti-War Centre at the same time. "But they saw leaving the army as an emotional problem, therefore a women's thing, so they brought along women to explain it to us. Most of these women coming in were very nationalist, but politics went into the background confronted with the life or death of their brothers or husbands." But now, she says, men come to talk to the Women in Black--a group founded to express a women's anti-war politics that was not centred simply around supporting the resistance of men. And they come alone, more of them with clear political ideas about why they will not serve in the war. In some sense, the act of the Women in Black of stepping back, of withdrawing from their traditional support role, has created a new, more open and genuine space for men, as well as women, to question their politics and their roles.

Slavica Kusic, her voice often breaking and near tears, spoke of her work with both refugee women, and survivors of domestic violence in Zagreb. Returning soldiers, she pointed out, get no counselling or other psychological help, and a very small pension; and, as usual, take out their frustrations on their families. She told the story of one woman who arrived at the shelter with her three children, shaking and almost hysterical after her husband had thrown a bomb at them. The shelter was unable to get him into psychological care--and the Minis-



ter of Social Services recently told them that they should be "teaching women how to obey their husbands, it would be better for them and their children."

"Bombs and guns and things are part of normal family life now," agreed Gordana Sevo.

Gordana Obradovic from Croatia talked about the way they have tried to work with women war victims—"We can only be a friend for them. Professional help will only make things worse ... they don't have control over their lives if they have a lot of professionals telling them what to do with their lives, what's good and bad. We just try to be there for them if they need it."

"Solidarity between women has gone across the borders, and it exists," Stasa insisted—noting as well that "the women from Greenham Common came and said that crying is not a form of weakness. We felt very happy about that." Women's solidarity may take just this simple and small a form, but perhaps that is one measure of how real it is.

"I wonder," one of the Italian Women in Black mused later, "if war is always a form of ethnic cleansing—a way of eliminating what is different."

Women at the meeting also made some concrete plans for future activities. As agreed in Bangkok, we will focus our energies on international actions on March 8 and November 25. We decided that the theme for November 25, 1993, would be "Name It"—that is, break the silence, and name the violences that women in our different communities suffer and resist, understanding that the naming itself can be an act of resistance. For March 8, we will continue with the theme of "Crossing the Lines". A mailing with more details on both days of action, and suggestions for what different groups might want to do, will be going out soon.

We also talked about communication within the group—which has not always been as efficient as we might hope. We came up with a few ideas for improving our communications with each other, including work on our mailing list to make it more complete and systematic, and choosing a convener to serve for a six-month period, who will co-ordinate communications and make sure tasks get done. The convener for the next six months (from August 1993 to January 1994) will be Maggie Helwig, from Toronto, Canada.

It is expected that the London office will be hiring a female staff person in January. The group had a short discussion of what our relationship would be to this woman, and how we will be able to support her in her work. It was agreed that we would meet next in London, in February 1994, partly to get to know and work with the new staffer.

It was encouraging to see that women's issues remained near the forefront of the discussion throughout the Council meeting. Two of the developing-world groups which had sent women to Bangkok were voted in as WRI

## **"Institutionalised Inequality of power": A WRI Statement Against Violence Against Women**

The War Resisters' International statement issued for the UN World Conference on Human Rights dealt with the issues of refusing military conscription, the need to extend the right to asylum, and the issue of violence against women. Excerpts from the statement concerning this last issue are quoted here.

"Violence within the family or the home is based on an institutionalised inequality of power. This violence is not only a serious human rights issue in itself but serves to limit the lives of women, to maintain women's inferior position and to stop many women organizing against their own oppression. WRI rejects the argument that certain forms of violence against women should be accepted as part of a society's 'cultural traditions'. The basic dignity of any human being and their right to live free from violence cannot be compromised in the name of 'cultural traditions', especially as these are so often defined from a male-centered viewpoint."

The statement specifically named certain types of violence against women: "This includes wife-battering; rape and sexual assault; discrimination in education and employment; dowry killings; female infanticide; forced abortion, sterilization and birth control; clitoridectomy; violence against lesbians; forced veiling and forced prostitution."

WRI criticized the UN for appointing an all-male panel to investigate the mass rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina and called for "gender-based violence and discrimination" to be recognised as a ground for claiming asylum.

affiliates (Tchad Nonviolence, from Chad, Africa, as an associate; Swadhina, from Calcutta, India, as a section). The affiliation of Swadhina was of particular importance, marking perhaps the first time that a group which sees its primary work as being on women's and development issues has affiliated to WRI. Almost a full day of discussion at the Council was devoted to questions of women and militarism, and how women's concerns can be more fully incorporated into the work of WRI. And, on the last day of Council, a mixed-gender subcommittee was set up, to prepare bibliographies and discussion materials for affiliates, and encourage them to open debate on feminism and anti-militarism in their own work. This subcommittee will work for one year only—the convener is Serge Vanden Berghie, of Cork, Ireland.

Finally, on Wednesday we joined with Verona's Women in Black for their weekly vigil. Women from Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Poland and the United States stood with the Italian women in a one-hour silent protest in the main piazza of the city.



Benita Acker

# Cambodian Women for Peace

by Liz Bernstein

There is a movement growing in Cambodia, a people's movement, led by women. It is a movement of peace and of people excited by the new possibilities dawning in their country. The possibility of laying down weapons after more than 20 years of war, where a new constitution may finally provide them with basic human rights. The movement began as a coalition of monks, nuns, women's groups, student associations, development and human rights groups who were determined to seize the current unique opportunities in creating a new peace.

Nou Sambo, vice-president of the leading women's organization, the Cambodian Women's Committee for Nonviolence and the Election, explained, "We women are tired of seeing our sons come back without legs and arms. We are tired of the violence and bloodshed in our country. We are 60 percent of the population and we can no longer remain silent. That is why at first we began a campaign to educate women to exercise their voting rights. Indeed we are 60 percent of the voters." This coalition has organized several activities over the past months, turning out thousands of people empowered by the successful elections. Over 90 percent of the Cambodian people braved threats and intimidation to express their burning desire for peace in the May 23-28 elections.

The Women's Committee for Nonviolence grew out of the first Cambodian National Women's Summit on March 8, 1993, (International Women's Day), as did another women's association called Indra Devi. These two were encouraged and supported by Khemara, the first Khmer non-governmental

organization in Cambodia, which focuses on the development needs of women. During the start of the election period, political threats, intimidation and assassinations were widespread. Nevertheless, the committee focused on the need to engage women in the elections and to educate them on their basic human rights, particularly their right to vote. The women also realized their vital role in building reconciliation and peace.

The various women's organizations organized the arrival of the Dhammayietra, a Walk for Peace and Reconciliation, into Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. Mobilizing students and human rights activists, the women's groups forged a coalition with the Walk as their first project. The Walk of 350 monks, nuns and lay people began 17 days earlier at Angkor Wat. The Walk totalled some 350 kilometres and crossed several war-torn provinces. As it entered the city, which was tense with the fear of violence, the walkers swelled to nearly 3,000 people. Nearly 10,000 people participated in walks and meditations for peace during the next three days (May 22-24), just before the historic UN-sponsored elections. One spectator testified, "People were so afraid of elections. Here in Phnom Penh they had started to stockpile rice...but the Walk has relieved us all, inspired us with hope."

One week later, June 4-6, the Coalition organized a three-day 'Peace Festival', before the election's final results were announced. The Festival consisted of silent meditations for peace, and ceremonial offerings to monks, which congratulated the Cambodian people on the successful elections. They also encouraged people to follow the Buddhist

principle of equanimity, and urged winners as well as losers to remain calm. Slogans quoted the Buddha's words: "Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is appeased by love. This is an eternal law".

On the Festival's final day some 1,000 people gathered at the Independence Monument to meditate and listen to the words of Buddhist spiritual leader Maha Ghosananda. Afterwards the crowd, joined by thousands, paraded a boat made of banana leaves to the river front. The boat was launched into the Tonle Sap river, symbolically casting off the past 20 years of violence and hatred and, as one participant said, "sending all those weapons back to where they came from!" People piled the boat with money before it was launched, as a symbol of ridding themselves of their own hatred, greed and delusion.

The Coalition met the next day to plan another peace event. When they presented their next plan to Maha Ghosananda, he laughed and said, "You all understand very well working for peace. There is no beginning and no end. We must continuously begin again and never become discouraged."

The ruling party, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), which won 38 percent of the election vote (as opposed to the FUNCINPEC Party's 45 percent) began to contest the results of the election. They refused to recognize the results, and called for an independent commission to review the election results. Several eastern provinces, traditional CPP strongholds, declared themselves autonomous. They tried to expel United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) authorities and FUNCINPEC and to partition the country, and caused

fear and anxiety among people. People's hopes for peace were shattered. The whole nation lived in a state of limbo awaiting UNTAC's response. When a monk commented, "But regardless, we must continue. We must have a sustained peace movement", a woman activist said, "Yes, we cannot stop until there is TRUE peace, and a new constitution in Cambodia."

On June 10, the day UNTAC head Yasushi Akashi announced the election's final results from the Royal Palace, the Coalition organized a "Bon Chlong Wiel Bey." During this festival thousands of people walked through the streets to the Palace, where birds and balloons





were released as symbols of freedom. The name of this festival in Khmer indicates crossing three deserts. Maha Ghosananda explained how Cambodians had now crossed the three deserts—hatred, greed and delusion—that cause war. “Like our breath, in and out,” he said, “like day and night, war and peace are always interchanging. Nothing is permanent. One leads to the other. Now we leave suffering and enter peace.”

On June 14, at the first meeting of the new Constituent Assembly, thousands of monks, nuns, and representatives of human rights and other community groups gathered in front of the Assembly building “to encourage the new Constituent Assembly in their noble task of preparing a new Constitution for Cambodia.” They also requested seats for representatives of monks, nuns, and non-governmental organizations and observers in order to make the writing of the new Constitution truly democratic. Their statement read, “The Constitution should be a reflection of the will of the people to move forward to peaceful times. We strongly believe the Constitution will provide us with freedom, security and create a civil society wherein basic rights of the people are guaranteed and respected.”

The crowd prayed and mediated as Assembly members filed past to enter the building. There were banners reading “The New Constitution Must Respect Womens’ Rights” and “Cambodian Women Support the New Constitution”. On June 28, the Coalition was granted three observer seats, on a permanent basis, in the Assembly.

A video of all these peace activities was made by a group of six women. The group was able, in a very short time, to document the whole period of the election, including the Peace Walk. Training in this medium gave the women confidence, as well as a way to reach thousands of others. Both local as well as international media continue to cover all events organized by the Coalition. The Women’s Committee for Nonviolence also created short poems,

skits and texts on women’s rights and the election, and on nonviolence and peace. These are broadcast daily over UNTAC radio.

The Coalition also developed plans for the following three months, the time allotted to write the Constitution according to the Paris Peace Accords. The Coalition wants to make sure the process is a democratic one. The Coalition created the “Ponleu Khmer: A Citizens’ Coalition for the Constitution”, which lobbies for the inclusion of the UN Bill of Rights, the establishment of an independent judiciary and for provisions for the advancement of women and gender sensitivity.

To encourage women’s participation in the writing of the Constitution, a workshop was held entitled “Women and the Constitution.” Copies of the draft constitution and information on women’s rights and mechanisms to secure them were printed and distributed. Public meetings with teachers, womens’ and human rights groups are being held throughout the country by teams of women. A video is being made of interviews with women about what they want from the Constitution. This video will be shown to Assembly representatives, as well as broadcast on Khmer television. The Coalition will continue to broadcast radio sketches about women’s rights and the Constitution.

Sochua Mu Leiper, director of Khemara, said that “the people clearly want to show their newly elected leaders the way to lead, a way which serves the people. It is not their right to lead, but rather their responsibility to respect the peoples’ rights to live in dignity.”

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*Liz Bernstein works with the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation, c/o AFSC, P.O. Box 604, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.*

# Arkadia -- A Lesbian and Gay Lobby in Belgrade

by Lepa Mladjenovic

In November 1990 some of us and our friends (and friends of our friends) met for the first time in one of the local cafes. After that we met off and on, mostly in private flats. The number of activists varied.

The group started with the intention to register as an association. This was impossible at the time, since no social institution was ready to lend us a meeting room. The group found no support from any political party, since social hate against lesbians and gay men was unshakable. In the Serbian Criminal Law Code (110/3) there is still an act which criminalizes adult homosexual activity. After one year of work the situation has changed a bit. The terms 'homosexuality' and 'lesbianism' have been introduced into the language of a new culture.

The main activities of our group are:

- working on the social invisibility of lesbians and gay men, mainly through the mass media (radio interviews, protest letters against homophobic public statements, newspaper articles, etc.);

- promoting anti-discrimination politics which hurt lesbians, but also pointing out discrimination against women and other marginalized groups;

- collaboration with the few democratic groups, mostly anti-war and feminist movement;

- organizing public discussions on lesbian and gay issues, the biggest one being for Lesbian and Gay Pride Day (in late June);

- collaborating with the Roza Club in Slovenia and the Lila Initiative in Croatia;

- collaborating with other lesbian and gay groups in Europe.

The present situation in Serbia is characterized by a militaristic ideology, and by poverty and unemployment. Women and single people are the first to be fired from their jobs, with 'single' often meaning lesbian or gay.

The economic situation in bordering states like Montenegro, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Croatia and Macedonia is also disastrous. This is coupled with new nationalist governments which do not promise an open democracy for stigmatized groups.

The position of lesbians and gays during war time is getting worse. All socially hated groups have become new targets for aggression, the new 'enemy'. Only nationalist interests are legitimate now, so the needs of different groups are secondary and of no importance. In the rural areas no lesbian or gay person has publicly raised his or her voice, as far as we know.

The exception is in the northern part of Serbia (Vojvodina), where the democratic tradition is more developed. There in 1992 the first gay cafe-club, Bambus, has opened. The year before a women-only restaurant opened in Novi Sad. The fact that Arkadia has no room of its own limits its activities. But our presence has still created a change in social attitudes.

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*Lepa Mladjenovic is an anti-war activist and lesbian feminist. Arkadia, Brace Baruh 11, 11000 Beograd, Serbia. Tel. 38 11 624 701.*

# Women In Black--Women Against War

Stasa Zajovic of the women's anti-war group in Belgrade, Women in Black--Women Against War, was invited by other anti-war groups to the State of Spain this April. Stasa spoke in Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza and many other cities. Her talks were well attended (over 150 people at each public talk) and the tour received good press coverage. Most of all, solidarity between peace groups in the various countries was strengthened. The following is a compilation of several reports about her visit.

"I was woken up by the radio," Maruja Torres of El País wrote, "by a woman speaking Castellano (Spanish), her voice blurred by emotion and a foreign accent, pronouncing a speech ancient as the world itself, a text only victims and poets are able to pronounce: a statement against war. Stasa is part of the movement Women in Black, which with the stubborn insistence of a Greek chorus demonstrates weekly in Belgrade, raising their voices against the widespread horror occurring today in former Yugoslavia, particularly against the horror women are suffering...

"`This is the first time,' she said, `that the world knows about women being raped while it is happening.' Only recently have we heard about the atrocities the Japanese committed against women from neighboring countries during World War II, the first time the world knows that the soldiers are also raping their wives, turning their homes into a second front.

"Once more Troy is burning. These women in black cry to the world about what is being lost. Don't let anyone tell you Helen is to blame."

Concha Martin, a member of the Committee of Tax Resistance of MOC (Conscientious Objectors' Movement) in Madrid, explains in her article how Stasa's visit came about: "Last December five MOC resisters travelled throughout former Yugoslavia contacting dif-



ferent anti-war groups (students, feminists, pacifists, trade unionists, etc.). In Belgrade's Centre of Antiwar Action they met Stasa Zajovic. She is intensely involved in antiwar activities and has a perfect command of Spanish. She was invited to make a tour in the state of Spain, in order to offer her message to the widest possible audience...

"Her experiences have aroused increasing interest and different solidarity networks to support Women in Black and oppose the war have started. Women in Black--Women Against the War have been nominated for the International Human Rights Prize given by the Asociación de Derechos Humanos de España (APDH--Spanish Association of Human Rights)...

"Her descriptions of what women's and pacifists' group did was very clear: before the war they denounced the militarization of society and the dangerous manipulation of the media; then the ideological and ethnic cleansings, and the validity of fundamentalist leaders as the sole representatives of the people...The groups called for civil disobedience, desertion, and denounced the manipulation and rape of women..."

## Announcement from the Australian Organisers

*[Editor's note: the dedicated women of CONNECT did an excellent job in identifying and raising funds for participants to last year's WRI women's conference. Much of the Conference's success was due to their hard work.]*

This is a short note to tell everyone that CONNECT has formally debriefed and disbanded—it no longer exists.

CONNECT formed specifically to aid the WRI Women's Working Group in organising the conference in Thailand. It was a gigantic, sometimes overwhelming task. And we did it! We feel happy with what we did though we are relieved it is over. We made lots of mistakes that we hope we learnt from. And we learned from the good bits too.

We were a group of just five women with very few resources and have now moved on to other work. As individuals we are still active in different combinations as part of the Australian Nonviolence Network. Some of our energy will go toward setting up and maintaining a Nonviolence Resource Centre at Commonground Community near Seymour. The information and resources we gathered and the networks with which we connected as part of this project can be accessed through the following address:

Margaret Pestorius  
Nonviolence Resource Centre  
P.O. Box 474, Seymour, Vic 3661  
Australia.



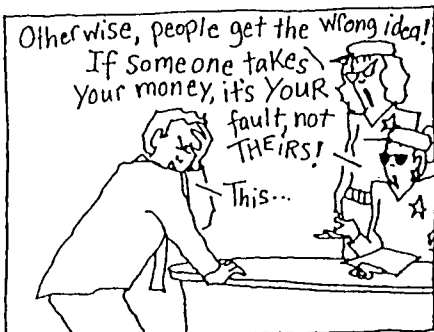
## on reading about the proposed stamp commemorating female veterans (yes, i'm one)

they're going to give us our own postage stamp,  
hot damn!  
when i was in the air force  
the men called us cunts and whores and said  
that WAF\* stands for women-all-fuck.  
and my mama asked if it was true we were all lesbos  
under our uniforms like my master-  
sergeant uncle told her.  
i said some of us are.  
we stood proud around our flag at burials.  
besides being whores and cunts and lesbians  
we were good soldiers.  
we held our m-16s.  
we shined our shoes.  
and now the government who keeps us typing  
and sopping blood,  
who keeps us out of the combat zone  
and off combat pay (because, as my recruiter said,  
females freak-out under fire,  
you know), this government,  
who has phased us out of the silos  
claiming our delicate fingers might fail  
to press the heavy buttons required  
to blast millions into oblivion,  
who feeds us lies about equality,  
now this government is giving us our own stamp  
just like the extinct pigeons  
and out-dated steam engines.  
i guess i'm supposed to be thrilled  
by the recognition  
but  
in the name of my sister cunts and whores and lesbians  
let me tell you, mister,  
it is too little too late  
and if you think it makes up for anything  
you are as full of shit  
as any lackland latrine  
during the first week  
of basic training.

by Ali MacDonald.

*Reprinted with permission from Phoebe, Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall, 1991. Phoebe is an interdisciplinary journal of feminist scholarship, theory and aesthetics, available from Women's Studies Program, State University of New York College at Oneonta, Oneonta, New York 13820-4015, USA.*

\* WAF – a woman member of the US Air Force



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## An Open Letter

To: Di McDonald, The Women and Nonviolence Project, Network Information Project, 30 Westwood Road, Southampton SO2 1DN, UK

Dear Sisters,

I read about the women and nonviolence project in the WRI Women's Newsletter. I am a nonviolent activist living at Commonground Community near Seymour, north of Melbourne, Australia.

I was very involved last year with organising the WRI Women's Conference 'Women Overcoming Violence.' It was a fascinating and wonderful experience but I won't ever undertake that sort of project again. It brought a large number of women together from different backgrounds and experiences but the issues covered in the conference were too broad. On reflection, it was my feeling that it would have been much better to organise something smaller. Or to organise something such as you are, where women share their strategies and experiences in nonviolent action, and encourage action as part of an international campaign on nonviolence. I was pleased to discover you have it well underway.

One of my personal goals for the next few years is to work on building firmer alliances between feminists and nonviolent activists. The groups share similar values and are working toward a shared vision of the world. It seems clear to me that nonviolence is widely used by the women's movement but often not in a systematic or conscious way. This results in women continually being drawn into patriarchal structures and systems--men's business--instead of stepping out and away and defining action for ourselves. For example, too often we get drawn into reacting to the



states and legal structures, or spend time begging desperately for funding from those we wish to undermine. Or we get wrapped in patriarchal management processes and play the game in academia or the professional world.

The Community where I live, Commonground, is built on the principles of feminism, nonviolence and anarchism. The Community has spent many years organising their business/organisation with feminist collective process and now teach their skills to others. Much of our work is with women's organizations.

The Melbourne Nonviolence Network, in which I also work as an activist, has developed much more from an 'action' perspective. Members work on a variety of environment, peace, women's and social justice issues. Later this year, as part of the Melbourne

Nonviolence Network, I am hoping to initiate a women's affinity group working with a group of women who have an explicit commitment to nonviolence. The affinity group is part of a broader experiment where six such groups operate separately but are linked through a common philosophy to support each other's activities. I am open to what issue and focus we will be working with, though I am tentatively exploring the arena of violence against women and/or sexual violence propaganda.

From this context several questions arise for me:

How can we as women make our best contribution to social change? And what does 'action' mean for us?

What issues, with what focuses (this will differ from culture to culture) will get at the core of patriarchy without just reacting to or getting drawn into patriarchal structures, systems processes and issues?

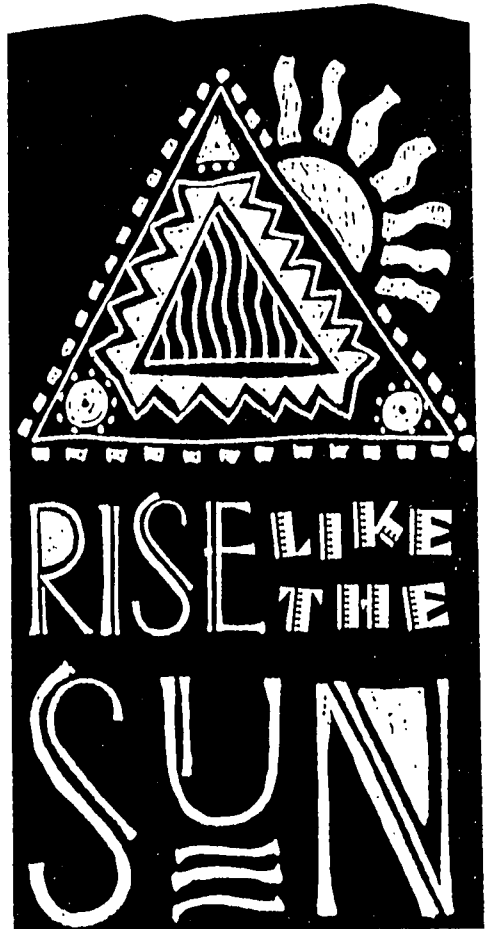
How can we support each other more consistently to increase the access we can have to our power? What empowerment processes do we have? How can we integrate the spiritual in all we do?

What group processes best serve the interests of us and all life?

I would love to hear from women who have considered/are considering these things. Especially WHY women think particular issues might lead to undermining patriarchy in their cultures. And I hope you will keep me in touch with the process and outcomes of the project.

Yours in peace,

Margaret Pestorius, Commonground  
PO Box 474, 3661 Australia





# WRI Women on the Move

## Stopping Violence in India

Many readers who attended the WRI Women's Conference in Bangkok last year will remember Hansa Mazgaonkar of Bombay, India. Hansa was part of a group of experienced Gandhians who went to Surat, in Gujarat state, after communal rioting there killed 200 people and left thousands homeless in January. She worked to ease tensions and to investigate abuses that occurred during the rioting. One such abuse was the gang rape of several Muslim women. The rape was pre-planned, as it was videotaped.

Hansa is also continuing her work in the anti-cow slaughter movement. She has been part of a 24-hour presence in front of the Deonar slaughter house in Bombay. This nonviolent presence has continued, non-stop, for 12 years. The activists are opposed to the slaughter of cows and bullocks for several reasons: over 70 percent of India's population lives in rural areas, where milk and manure from cows, and the labour of bullocks, is essential for farming. The sale of such animals triggers a downward spiral into poverty. The animals are butchered for their meat, which is exported mainly to the Gulf states, and for leather, which is frequently exported to the West. For more information on the anti-cow slaughter movement, and on how Western activists can help lobby for restrictions on the import of meat and leather from India, write: Hansa Mazgaonkar, Bombay Sarvodaya Centre, Friendship Building, Kajupada Pipe Line Road, Kurla, Bombay 400 072, India. Tel. +91 22 511 3660 or +91 22 513 7398, fax +91 22 514 3130 (include the address on the fax).

## Health Care Workers Against War

Lineke Shakenbos of Vrouwen voor Vrede (VVV--Women for Peace) and colleague Mans van Zandbergen gave a presentation on nurses, war and peace this summer at the International Council of Nurses (ICN) in Madrid, State of Spain. They examined the ICN code of ethics for nurses and its application in war time and for promoting peace. As a result of the presentation, an international network has been started to help health care workers who are looking more closely at their role in war and peace. For more information contact: Lineke Shakenbos, Normapad 4, 3816 EZ Amersfoort, the Netherlands.

## Indigenous Women's Center

Pam Feldman from the US was also at the Bangkok conference, offering much needed support in the form of making photocopies. Since January she has been working with refugees along the Thai-Burmese border. She is working with the newly established Indigenous Women's Development Center (P.O. Box 169, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50002 Thailand), which has been set up to help indigenous women from Burma who have been forced to flee their homes due to suppression by the Burmese military government. You can read more about the Center in the next issue.

# The Concubine at Gibe

by Chaya Shalom

[Editor's note: the concubine at Gibe refers to Judges 19 in the Bible. A traveller, staying overnight in Gibe, offers his concubine to a mob in order to prevent being assaulted himself. The concubine is raped all night by the mob. The traveller cuts her dead body into 12 pieces and sends them to his tribesmen, thus provoking a war against the Gibeans.]

I have something horrible to tell you, Hania:  
the concubine from Gibe came to my door  
dismembered, eyes gouged out.

I thought I'd go crazy.

"My sister from Bosnia"  
She introduced the woman with her  
her body dishevelled, ploughed deep

"They did with me as they pleased,"  
said one.

"they robbed me of all hope,"  
said another.

Carrying in truncated arms  
a little girl from the streets of Bangkok  
a baby from the alleys of Gaza.

And on the girl's forehead a mark  
and on the baby's forehead the same sign:  
a deep round hole  
from which their spirit was drained  
through which their life was wrenched out.

"We have come," they warned  
"because time doesn't choose a name  
and deed has no limits  
You are I  
and I am She."

And it was important to me to hear your voice,  
Hania  
Rising from your house in Ramalla,  
crossing the barricades  
passing the barbed wire.  
Because I almost went crazy, Hania.  
It was really horrible, Hania.

I don't want to end my life at Gibe.  
Nor your life either, in the fields of Bethel  
You are not a plaything.  
And I am not for their pleasure.

I know, Hania,  
our strength is  
in the thread connecting us  
it has no watch, no passport:  
They, to Gibe,  
will return no more.

*Chaya Shalom lives in Jerusalem and works  
with the Israeli women's peace movement:  
"This is to my friends Hania from Ramalla,  
Rulla from Gaza, Pacharapon from Bangkok,  
Stasa from Belgrad, Biljana from Zagreb."  
The poem was translated from the Hebrew  
by H. Ovnat*

# News

## Death in Bangladesh

A 30-year-old woman named Noorjahan was stoned to death in the village of Chatakchaara, Bangladesh in January. Noorjahan's first husband had disappeared and her father had married her to another villager, against the wishes of the village religious leader, who wanted to marry her himself. He declared her second marriage invalid. The death sentence was decided on by the local village council.

Bangladeshi newspapers condemned the killing. *The Daily Star* (28 January 1993) wrote: "The death of Noorjahan has once again brought in view the desperate situation of women. Women here are encumbered by a feudal patriarchy, which institutionalizes male authority over them at home and in society.... They are relegated to a second-class status and their labor deemed peripheral to social production, their being reduced to that of an object..."

## New Women's Think Tank in India

Akshara is a feminist research and documentation center in Bombay, India, committed to investigation the effects of social policy on women. Akshara has published three excellent and thought-provoking publications: *Not Just A Matter of Faith*, on religious fundamentalism and women; *Shadow Workers*, on home-based industries and the needs of women workers (the video "Always At Home" is also available); and *The Quota Question: Women and Electoral Seats*, on the implications of the Maharashtra government's decision that 30 percent of all elected seats

must be reserved for women. Akshara, c/o Fulchand Nivas, no. 19, Chaupati Sea Face, Bombay 400 007, India.

## Before You Take a Bite...

In the UK there are three and one half million sufferers of eating disorders, mostly women. Yet \$130 million a year is spent on advertising for chocolate in the UK, with most advertisements aimed at women. At least 32 dangerous pesticides are used in cocoa production, with their residues found in chocolate bars and in the soil where cocoa is grown. 80 percent of the workers on cocoa plantations are women, who report cases of respiratory diseases, nausea, headaches and skin rashes from their work. Most women earn an average of US \$5 a day. The Politics of Passion campaign is working to highlight the injustice of the situation. Contact Naomi Diamond, Women's Environmental Network, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA, UK.

## The Debt is Bad for All of Us

A Debt Boomerang Campaign packet is available for £3 (cheque payable to Third World First). Material in the packet explains how unfair Third World debt affects both North and South, and tells you what you can do about it. The Campaign, a national student organization, works against world poverty. The Campaign provides speakers on the debt crisis, videos and stalls, and organizes workshops, conferences and training events. Activists are urged to boycott banks with bad Third World debt records. Such banks include Lloyds, Midland, NatWest and Barclays in the UK; ANZ in Aotearoa/New Zealand; Chase Manhattan, Citibank and Bankers Trust in the US; and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Other suggestions are to move your money account to a socially responsible bank, pension fund or investment scheme. Third World First, 217 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1XG UK. Tel. 0865 245678 Fax 0865 200179.

# Resources

**Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the US Military in Asia** by Sandra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus (The New Press, New York, USA; 1993, 343 pages, US \$24.95 paperback) is a collection of six essays (by Cynthia Enloe and Walden Bello, among others), plus interviews with five Korean, Okinawan and Filipina prostitutes, which examine the links between militarization and the oppression of women. The authors point out that unless 'sexual imperialism' is dealt with, no change of power will mean real autonomy for women in the region.

**Gathering Rage: The Failure of 20th Century Revolutions to Develop A Feminist Agenda** by Margaret Randall (Monthly Review Press, New York, USA; 192 pages, \$12 paperback) is a feminist critique of socialism, and a passionate call for a re-examination and definition of power. Randall, an award-winning writer who had to battle US Immigration authorities to be re-admitted to her native United States after living in Central America, gives a detailed account of women's experience in revolutionary Nicaragua and Cuba. While such revolutionary movements have permitted women to think about their own liberation, Randall argues that their ruling parties have also been frightened of and opposed to an autonomous women's movement.

**Back Off! How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers** by Martha J. Langelan (Simon & Schuster, New York, USA; 380 pages, \$12 paperback) examines the dynamics of sex and power in sexual harassment, the motives behind harassers' actions and why traditional responses of appeasement or aggression don't work. The book describes 70 real-life examples of

successful strategies against sexual harassment. The examples range from a 10-year old girl who escaped a child molester, to women who successfully confronted landlords, rapists and employers. The author, past president of the Washington, DC Rape Crisis Center, argues that sexual harassment is often used by rapists to test potential victims; women who respond passively are viewed as easy prey. The book is particularly important because it names and emphasizes direct action techniques and nonviolent resistance. It makes for inspiring reading. A bibliography and list of US organizations and groups is included.

**Ours By Right: Women's Rights as Human Rights**, edited by Joanna Kerr (Zed Books, London, UK; 192 pages, £12.95/\$19.95) is a collection of essays by an international group of women's rights lawyers, scholars and activists. Obstacles are detailed, as are the key issues and the action required to place women's human rights on the international agenda. Also available from Zed Books is Katarina Tomasevski's *Women and Human Rights*, a well-illustrated book which looks at women's historical position, and how education and anti-discrimination legislation can improve the status of both women and girls. Zed Books, 7 Cynthia St., London N1 9JF, UK. Tel. 071 837 8466.