

ACT Reference

N°13

WRI WOMEN



HAPPY
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

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



from Sauti ya Sitti, Tanzania

REPORT FROM THE
4TH INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

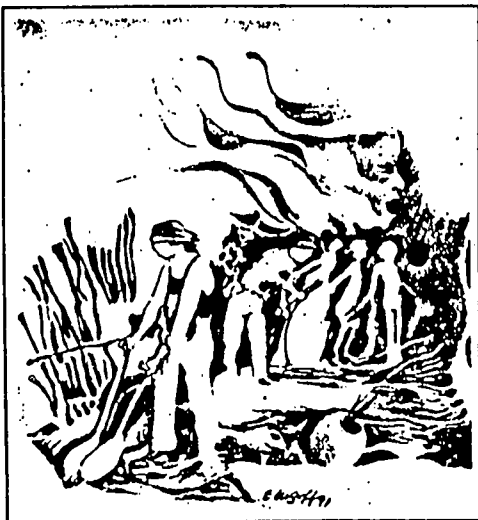
WAR RESISTERS INTERNATIONAL
55 DAWES STREET, SE 17 1EL LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN

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

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Thanks to all the contributors. Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of WRI.

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Material for the next WRI Women's Newsletter must be received by the end of July, 1993. 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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WE DID IT!

After almost five years of hard work, the 4th War Resisters' International Women's Conference was held in late November in Thailand. The most ambitious conference yet, and the first one held outside Europe, the conference drew 170 women from 63 nations together. Judging by the participants' evaluations, it was a success. Another measure of success was the fact that the core organizers were energized enough to want to work on the 5th women's conference! Participants from South Africa and Aotearoa/New Zealand offered to return home and ask their groups about possibly sponsoring the next conference, for some time after 1994. We hope to have a slide show ready soon about the Conference.

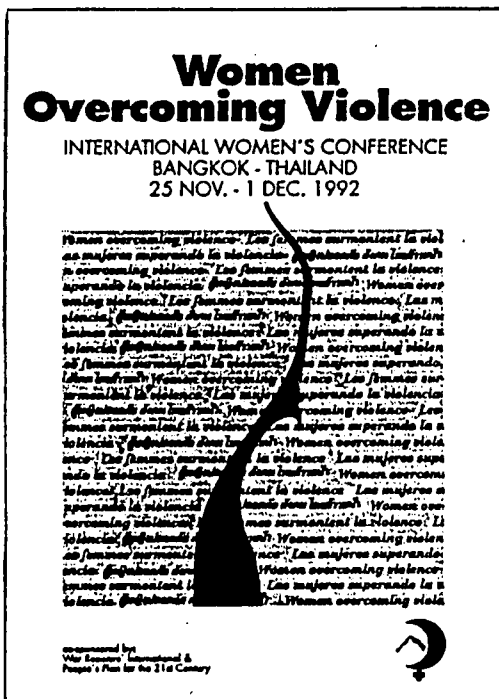
What did we gain by all the hard work and the risks many women took by participating in the conference? WRI and its message of nonviolent struggle gained a higher profile among many groups, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Valuable exchanges took place between women from the South and the North, exchanges that will shape our future work. New networks were formed and old ones strengthened. We hope that you will use the pages of the WRI Women's newsletter to keep the networks informed of your activities.

You can read about how the conference can influence future WRI action programs in the following pages. Perhaps the major contribution the conference made was to redefine war to include violence against women. That violence takes many forms: the widespread rape of 'enemy' women, the increased domestic violence as brutalized soldiers return home, the violence of hunger and poverty as the military budget grows fatter, the displacement as women and their children flee the fighting.

Women's perspectives on war must be put on the agenda of WRI and on the agenda of every peace group. It's time to re-open the debate between the feminist movement and the peace movement, to deepen our analysis of the inseparable links between sexism and militarism. If the conference succeeds in doing that, we have accomplished a great deal indeed.

Hundreds of women made this conference possible. To list all of your names would take the whole newsletter. We want to thank you, and to give particular thanks to all the Thai volunteers, to MIX who helped Caroline in the London office, to Fela, to Ken's beautiful coverage of the Conference in Peace News (No. 2363, February 1993 Issue), to all the interpreters and translators, to the WRI Women's Working Group, and most of all to the participants.

Shelley Anderson



"Women Overcoming Violence". Poster of the International Women's Conference in Thailand. 40x60 cm; three colours (gold and green on black). Price: 1-9 Posters 3 US\$ each, plus 3 US\$ Post and Packing. 10 or more Posters 1 US\$ each, plus 8 US\$ Post and Packing. Payment in advance ONLY (in US Dollar-notes). Order from Graswurzelwerkstatt, Schornhoststr. 6, 3000 Köln 60, Germany

"OF PAIN AND DREAMS": WOMEN OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

Women came from Sri Lanka, Senegal, Fiji and the US; from Germany, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe and Croatia. In all, some 170 women from 63 nations gathered in late November (1992) for the "Women Overcoming Violence" conference.



Violence against women, militarism and development were the three themes tackled by the 4th WRI Women's Conference "Women Overcoming Violence". An entire day was devoted to each theme, with an opening plenary session in the morning and workshops throughout the day. Resolutions for action were collected from the workshops. The last day of the Conference was devoted to discussion about what resolutions the whole Conference could accept, and ways they could be implemented.

Participants at the opening day of the Conference were greeted by Khunying Kanita of the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women (APSW). The conference took place in APSW's WE-TRAIN facilities, where abused women can find shelter and employment training. "APSW began during the United Nations' Decade for Women," Khunying Kanita said. "We opened the shelter 12 years ago. We could not call it a shelter for battered women, so we said it was for distressed women and children. We have helped more than 27,000 women--battered and deserted wives, girls forced into prostitution, rape survivors--and children since then."

Niramorn Prudtatorn of Friends of Women then spoke. "Women are fighters," she said. "We will try all efforts to do what we want to do. This conference is made of pain and dreams. Many women have been hurt, violated, tortured, even women in this room." Niramorn asked a young social worker named Panyaporn Sawangrui to then stand up. Panyaporn had been shot months before at the APSW shelter while protecting a client from an angry husband.

Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, internationally known for her feminist interpretations of Buddhist texts, then read from the writings of her mother, Ven. Voramai Kabilsingh, a Buddhist nun who has established the first women's temple in Thailand. The reading urged women to realize their full potential as peacemakers.

WOMEN OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

The November 26 plenary focused on violence against women. Moderated by Rada Gungaloo, who helped organize the first shelter for battered women in Mauritius. "Domestic violence is a common global issue," said Yayori Matsui, a Japanese journalist and founder of the Asian Women's Association. "Societies accept that beating women is a normal way of life. We must look at how we can change this attitude. Violence against women should be seen as a human rights issue."

Roberta Bacic spoke of the nonviolent struggle against the 18-year long military dictatorship in Chile. The Mothers of the Disappeared gave people the courage to publicly resist the dictatorship. While "our struggle is now seen as the real history of the country," and disappearances are now seen as a crime against humanity, many women still cannot get the pensions and child care benefits due them, as their 'disappeared' husbands have never been declared legally dead.

Elizabeth Iba of Bougainville next spoke of the widespread wife battering in Papua New Guinea. "Men pay a bride price for women," she said, "and so they feel they can do as they like with her." Women's groups have produced posters, a booklet series and a comic book for schools which have raised awareness about domestic violence. Elizabeth also spoke of the violent situation in Bougainville, where 4,000 people have died since the crisis over land rights began--most of them women and children.

"We are living in a violent world--and 90 percent of the violence is against women and children. Survival is the concern of all women," said Elaine Hewitt of Barbados, "yet we are left out of all development. We women need to be in politics because that's where development policies are made. Women and development go hand in hand. Forward ever, backward never!"

The more than a dozen workshops that day showed that women were indeed looking at ways to change such attitudes. A workshop on "Working with Rape Survivors" drew women from Africa, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. An Australian aboriginal woman spoke of the violence of being denied land rights, while a spokeswoman from Zimbabwe's Musasa Project explained the counseling and public education they do around domestic violence and rape. Women of S.O.S. Femmes, the first refuge for battered women in Mauritius, are demanding a reform of the country's social security system, so battered women living separately from their husbands

can claim social security benefits in their own right. A video against domestic violence has been introduced into schools in Papua New Guinea, while the Pakistani women's group Roshni has established a center for victims of torture.

WOMEN AND MILITARISM

November 27, which dealt with Women and Militarism, opened with a plenary session moderated by Adele Kirsten of South Africa. The speakers were Nicole Wala of Radio Djido in Kanaky, Angelica Kashunju of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Uganda, Carla Goffi of Mouvement Chretien pour Paix in Belgium and Rita Baua of the Asia-Pacific Peoples Forum in the Philippines.

Wala and Goffi sparked controversy, Wala because of her statement that the Kanaky independence movement was "forced to resort to violence if the world outside" was to know of their struggle; Goffi because of her analysis that national service for young people could be a good thing, and that the end of Belgian conscription was a complete victory for the peace movement.



Kashunju reported on the increased use of women by both sides during Uganda's series of vicious coups. Rural women were forced to work as spies, couriers and assassins. Many women, Kashunju said, are still prisoners in military barracks, where they are raped by soldiers. Rita Baua talked of the 400,000 women prostituted around US military bases in the Philippines--and the 20,000 children who also survived by servicing US military personnel. "The women's movement was the first in the anti-bases movement," she said, largely because the effects of the bases on women's lives were so obvious. Some women's

groups are pushing for the conversion of the vacated bases into rehabilitation centers for prostitutes. The government's response, in sharp contrast, is to keep the sex industry alive through tourism.

"Militarism and Prostitution" was also the topic of a day-long workshop, as was "Divided Countries and Communities: Women's Struggle Against Civil War and Occupation". Shorter workshops included "Women's Actions Against the Army and Military Bases", "War Trauma and Children", "Women as War Refugees" and "Women and Conscientious Objection to Militarisation".

MILITARISATION AND PROSTITUTION

The "Militarisation and Prostitution" workshop was attended by a dozen women from almost as many countries. The poverty caused by war and the presence of foreign troops, in this case United Nations troops, have resulted in a rise in prostitution in both Cambodia and former Yugoslavia. "The UN troops know only a few words," said Stasa Zajovic of Belgrade's Women in Black, "'How much?' and 'where?'"

She also spoke about the mass rapes that are taking place throughout ex-Yugoslavia. "We have been trying to collect documentation about war rape," she said. "We know that at the beginning of the war in Bosnia, military brothels were mobilized and that there has been massive violence. We have detected some characteristics. First, rape the enemy's women. But the enemy's are not sufficient, so rape your own." She reported seeing a television interview where a gunman said he was paid 100 German marks for every bus load of Serbian women he shot. The gunman said he didn't care, however, who he shot, so he killed Croatian and Muslim women also. "Serbians or Croats will only talk about the other side's rapes," said Zajovic. "But we know that women on all sides are raped."

The military has also increased prostitution in other countries. "There are many young widows," in Cambodia because of the war, said Mrs. Dy Ratha of Cambodia. Women are now 69 percent of the Cambodian population. Poverty forces many women "to either work in hotels or go to the houses of foreign soldiers. In the countryside, soldiers 'marry' a woman for \$2,000, then leave them when they return home. Prostitution has become much worse," she said. Conference participants agreed to send letters of protest to Yasushi Akashi, head of the United Nations Transitional Authority

In Cambodia (UNTAC). Akashi helped fuel the increasing sexual harassment of Cambodian women by remarks he made in October: calling the UN troops "18-year-old, hot blooded soldiers", he said the troops would naturally want to drink beer and chase "young beautiful beings of the opposite sex."

CROSSING THE LINE

Participants from Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Croatia and Bougainville, in a workshop on "Women in Divided Communities and Countries", proposed a special women's action for International Women's Day, 8 March 1993. They encouraged peace groups like War Resisters' International to give support to women living in countries divided by war to cross the line and reach out to women on the 'other' side, in order to make peace. Publicising the actions that take place around this theme would inspire others to seek peace.



WOMEN DEFINING OUR OWN DEVELOPMENT

The next day was devoted to the theme of Women and Development. The plenary session, moderated by WRI Women's Working Group member Trini Leung of Hong Kong, featured Mereso Agina of the 250,000 member Kenyan women's organization Maemdeleo Ya Wanawake; Nelsa Curbelo of the Latin American peace and justice network, Serpaj; and Thai feminist Tongdee Potlyong. Suteera Thomson, director of the Gender and Development Research Institute in Bangkok, also spoke. "Women are grossly under-represented in national politics (in Thailand), and in shaping of public policies which bear directly on their lives and welfare," she said. Despite the fact that women workers play a major role in Thailand's booming economy (two-thirds of Thai women workers still receive about half of the minimum wage set by the government), only a few women hold elected positions.

"In September 242 women ran for Parliament," she continued. "A record 15 were elected....The new women members of Parliament

are well-versed on women's issues and promised to cross party lines to cooperate with each other in ending discrimination against women, improving wages and working conditions for women and curbing the abuses of the sex industry....

"Looking back on our experience, it is clear to us that the key to our success was not the amount of money available for activities, but rather finding ways to work creatively with what was available; maximising the use of existing resources; effectively developing, maintaining and using networks; analyzing and synthesising the mass of available information; and deriving an appropriate strategy to meet the challenge before us," she said.

These were important points for all the participants to remember as they shared information on developing strategies that would end violence against women.



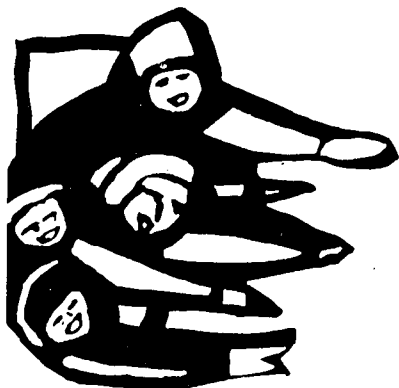
GETTING DOWN TO WORK

After each morning's plenary session there was a series of workshops, also devoted to the day's theme. The following is just an example of many of the workshops that took place. Talking circles (sometimes called affinity groups) also took place every day. Talking circles were informal, small discussion groups that allowed women to explore an issue in more depth, or to share experiences more personally.

Half-way through the Conference, the Thai organizers arranged a day-long bus tour. The Grand Palace and Temple of the Emerald Buddha inside Bangkok were visited; lunch was held in a beautiful sculpture garden outside the city, where the works of well-known Thai artist Mislem Yipintsol were shown. The temple of the Venerable Voramal Kabilsingh, who has led the struggle for women's ordination in Thailand, was visited. Her temple is the first--and so the only--Buddhist temple built for and by women in Thailand. The Venerable blessed the participants. Lastly, a school for young girls from marginalised communities was visited. The school is an innovative social project operated by Buddhist nuns, who are usually expected to not get involved in social change work.

A SAMPLING OF WORKSHOPS

Workshop on WRI Women: Women already involved in WRI held this workshop in order to get more women involved and to bring women's perspectives into WRI policy; other participants were interested in getting more information about WRI. Everyone was interested in building a network of grassroots women workers throughout the world.



Religion and Nonviolence: The dangers of fundamentalism to women were recognized by all participants. Several examples were given where religion, if not the cause of violence, was used as a rationalization for violence. A Karen (an ethnic minority group in Burma) woman said the military dictatorship now in control in Burma destroys both Muslim

mosques and Christian churches, frequently in the name of Buddhism. A Turkish woman said that Islam has become a way to oppose Western domination, while an Indian woman said religion should be replaced by spirituality. A woman who works in Cambodia gave an example of how religion helped to heal the wounds of war. It was agreed that women must be more vocal in expressing feminist interpretations of religious texts.

Lesbian Struggle Against Oppression: 13 women, over half of them from Asia, participated in this workshop. It was emphasized that lesbian rights are women's rights. When lesbians organize around specific lesbian demands, especially within feminist groups, it is seen as divisive, immoral or trivial. Just as women's rights are beginning to be seen as human rights, lesbian rights must be seen as an integral part of women's rights. It was especially appreciated that Asian lesbians were willing to speak out and share their stories.

Changing Women's Position in People's Movements and Mixed Groups: The resource women spoke of discrimination and violence experienced by themselves and other women within political movements, mostly peace movements, in their home countries. A Canadian woman spoke of the situation of Innu women, who are leading the campaign against military bases in their community, but who are often abused by their husbands at home. A Turkish woman spoke of her experiences working with Kurdish women, who also have a leading role in the struggle of their people but who are systematically ill-treated by the men they work with.

It was agreed by all participants that though most women wanted to continue to work in mixed (female and male) groups, there was a strong need for women in these groups to form women's caucuses and sometimes work separately from men. This was seen as an essential step in overcoming the problems expressed. It was noted that it is important to include all kinds of women in these caucuses, urban and rural, educated and not.

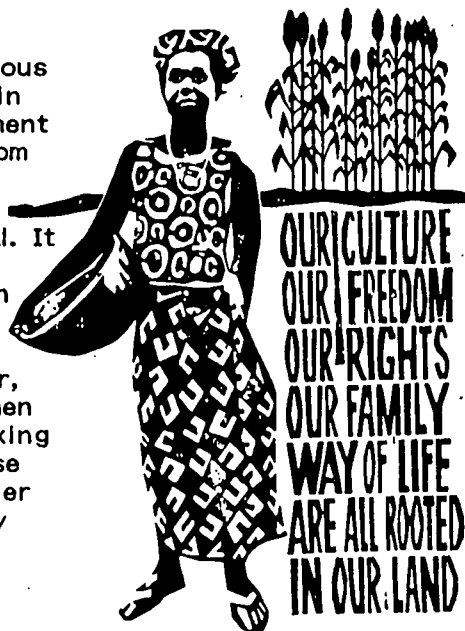
Neocolonialism and Militarism: Links between colonialism and militarism include removal of people from their traditional lands, so that the land can be used for military purposes; military enforcement of corporate exploitation; diversion of resources from social programs to the military; and harassment and persecution of indigenous peoples by governments.

Europeans have attempted to maintain their political structures after 'decolonization,' so economic dependence of the colonized on

the colonizers still exists. Language, traditional land bases, religion and culture are still being eroded by colonizers. It is important to identify mutual indigenous experiences across cultures, and to incorporate indigenous and land rights issues into demilitarization campaigns. People of color must be included in leadership positions and indigenous culture supported.

Destruction of Indigenous Lands and Cultures:

The resource woman and some of the participants spoke of their attempts to preserve indigenous culture on their traditional lands in the face of corporate and government encroachment. A representative from the group Women's Grassroots outlined the possibilities of sustainable development in Senegal. It was stressed that the attempt to preserve indigenous cultures often generates government repression. Resolutions from the workshop included boycotting tropical timber, developing a database to link women working on similar issues, and asking every participant to reduce, re-use and recycle material goods, in order to live an environmentally-friendly lifestyle.



COMMON ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

During the last day of the Conference, the many resolutions that came out of the workshops were put together and given to all the talking circles (affinity groups). The talking circles discussed the resolutions, then selected a representative who met with all the other representatives and organizers. Out of this last meeting, the Conference officially accepted or rejected the resolutions, and decided upon actions that all the Conference participants agreed to work on.

The following are the resolutions that were discussed during the

last day. Conference participants agreed to act on these resolutions; after a few of the resolutions there are specific requests for action from WRI.

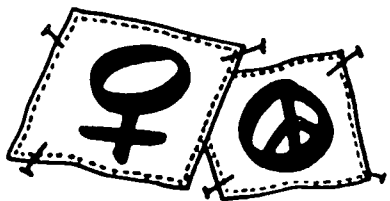
RESOLUTION A

"To the United Nations Security Council and our respective governments: We are women, some coming from countries with conflicting interests and countries at war, who have seen bloodshed, the loss of life and human dignity as a result of racism, sexism, antagonism and militarism, taking many different forms around the world. These have given rise to internal strife, military intervention or foreign occupation.

We are making our voices heard as a condemnation against violence as a means of resolving any problems in a state or between states. We demand an immediate end to the war and violence between opposing sides within our countries and the immediate withdrawal of foreign occupying forces from our countries. We who have undergone violence--including sexism--and war demand that all difference be resolved through peaceful negotiations and that every measure be taken for enhancing the quality of life. We shall not support efforts that do not respect human rights or that use violence against people, women and men, whether in their own countries or against other countries. This statement was initially signed by women from Cyprus and Turkey, from Serbia and Croatia, from South Africa, Russia, Morocco and Israel.

Proposal for WRI action

We propose that WRI encourage, promote and publicize special actions by women's groups and women in peace groups on International Women's Day, 8 March 1993, around the theme of 'crossing the line.' By this we mean that women's groups would communicate with and plan joint activities with other women's groups in nations, communities, ethnic groups and cultures where they have experienced war or other kinds of conflicts. The goal of these activities would be to highlight the common experiences and peace principles that we have with women on the 'other side', whether we



be from neighborhoods or nations in conflict. This might be between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot women, Israeli and Palestinian women, Croatian and Serbian and Bosnian women, or women of different racial groups or economic classes in the United States.

We think that every women's group will find good examples in their situations. Due to the shortness of time, we expect this project to be, in most cases, relatively small. We ask WRI to act as a promoter and publicist for these activities, particularly by publishing the examples of activities that take place on this day. Groups should also send ideas for activities to their contacts abroad.

RESOLUTION B

The WRI Women's Conference condemns the sexual mistreatment and abuse of Cambodian and other women by some male members of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). We are sending a letter to this effect to Mr. Yasushi Akashi, head of UNTAC. Mr. Akashi has referred to the rise in prostitution as "normal" because "boys will be boys" and they are "18-year-old hot-blooded soldiers" who deserve to enjoy "young, beautiful beings of the opposite sex." We also demand that all United Nations personnel be educated about sexual harassment.

Proposal for WRI Action

This Conference calls for action being taken around the world every year on November 25, the International Day to End Violence Against Women. Activities could center on this day, while also being part of a possible six weeks of action, beginning with the Take Back the Night marches traditionally held in late October and extending until December 6, the anniversary of Canada's Montreal Massacre (editor's note: several years ago, 14 women in a Montreal university engineering class were shot to death by a young man, who left a note stating that he 'hated feminists.')

We want to strengthen our international links by commemorating this day all over the world. This will empower our activities in our home countries.

We commit ourselves to inform each other about our activities on this day. We ask WRI to coordinate this information through the London office; to fundraise for this project; to send out two mailings per year, one before and one after November 25; to

publish our activities in Peace News and the WRI Women's Newsletter; and to give staff time towards coordinating, promoting and publicizing these events annually. The theme for 1993 is still under discussion: suggestions made so far are solidarity with migrant women and women refugees, and Indigenous women. To choose themes now and in the future we ask the women at this conference to set up a committee which collects suggestions and decides. The committee should represent women from different countries and cultures. Communication can be by telephone, mail, fax and electronic mail--no travel is necessary.

RESOLUTION C

Embittered about the very fact that the sexual abuse of women is possible at all, and that it has become the regular practice during war, the perverse 'proof' of the warrior's power and the conqueror's strategy, so that the rapists are already dissolved of every responsibility for their crimes: we demand:

1. that rape be treated as a war crime and therefore demand that the 3rd section of the 4th Geneva Convention of 1949 regarding the legal protection of women war victims be changed;
2. Demand the establishment of an Independent International court whose responsibility would be to punish those who are responsible for and who have committed such crimes against women;
3. Appeal to all International and non-governmental women's organizations, to peace groups and to women's groups, to form independent teams of women as soon as possible in order to help organize rape crisis centers for psychological and financial help and support to raped women in areas at war, such as former Yugoslavia; as for governments operating in these areas we expect their help and cooperation according to their authorities and International Conventions;
4. Demand that all war camps, such as those throughout former Yugoslavia, be immediately closed, especially those in which women are exposed to sexual abuse by soldiers, to psychological torture and the worst forms of psychological and physical abuse, violence and manipulation.

RESOLUTION D

The current model of economic power and development based on global domination by a few major powers has increased the gap between the rich and the poor, encouraging economic dependency and exploitation and fostering a consumer mentality. This has contributed to the destruction of cultures and values of cooperation and interdependency. We are also aware of the increasing domination of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which practically dictate the economic programs of countries indebted to them; and of the further exploitation of the poor by national capital. These are some of the problems that women in particular have experienced under this system: the existence of social, economic and political constraints which do not allow women to participate to their full capacity; lack of involvement in the decision-making process at all levels; inhuman working conditions with limited maternity benefits; technological advancements which do not serve the interests of women.

We believe that it is possible and desirable to create a model of development which ensures the physical and material well-being of all, benefiting from each other's resources and not exploiting them. Development should lead to social, emotional, economic and intellectual liberation. For this to happen, women must be empowered to change the unjust economic system (such as the multinationals and the military-industrial complex) and help create a society where all people, women and men, are involved in a participatory democracy, making decisions at local, regional, national and international levels; where values such as respect for human beings and the environment are nurtured, where in the workplace and in the household, people are valued above the product, where technology is more beneficial to all women. Only through solidarity amongst women of the world working towards this vision can these objectives be achieved.

RESOLUTION E

We, the women of the WRI Women's Conference, from different continents and countries, are concerned about the resurgence and the rise of the ideology of the extreme right, expressed in such forms as racism, sexism, chauvinism, militarism and violence in our countries. We condemn as well the aspect of this ideology which

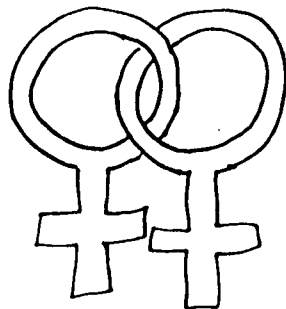
threatens the rights and freedoms of women and their autonomy, and their rights to control their own lives, their bodies and their free thoughts. We condemn hatred and violence towards people of color, foreigners and refugees. We condemn the so-called 'New World Order' and the repression of people living with AIDS, gay and lesbian people and others.

The following resolutions were also proposed, but they were controversial and not adopted by the whole Conference.

RESOLUTION ON LESBIAN RIGHTS

Women's rights and lesbian rights go hand in hand. Women struggling for independence, who are 'too vocal' in their criticism of structures that exploit other women, are silenced and discredited by being labelled lesbians. This attempt to divide women and stop our own struggle for autonomy and independence must be stopped. Lesbians are subjected to physical violence like other women. Because we choose to have relationships with other women rather than men, we are sometimes even more vulnerable to such violence and abuse.

We ask the conference participants to return to your own communities and organizations with a commitment to putting lesbian rights on your agendas. Lesbians within your own organizations need support and recognition. We ask that you make a commitment to breaking down the silence and invisibility that surround lesbianism and that you make an effort to learn about lesbian culture in your own community. This will in particular support lesbians in the South who are sometimes wrongly accused of following or being 'corrupted' by Western ideas.



This resolution was not passed. A small number of women felt uncomfortable with the proposal, though none actually blocked it. The failure of the proposal was due to the lack of time to find a satisfactory rewording, especially for the paragraph asking women to put lesbian rights on their organization's agenda. There was also concern that the statement as written could put pressure on

lesbian women to come out when it might not be safe or possible for them to do so. It was encouraging that all the participants, though coming from many different cultures and background, supported the fundamental recognition of the rights of lesbian women.

RESOLUTION ON 1995 UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE.

Recognizing that China is a country where human rights and women's rights are grossly violated and that representation and participation by non-governmental Chinese women's organizations will be suppressed, we ask the conference to protest to the UN Women's Rights Commission, which is preparing the 1995 Conference to be held in Beijing, to change the venue. We push for the International Women's Conference to be held at a site where the local women can participate and speak freely and openly about their situation and problems.

We propose that our conference send a letter of protest, endorsed by all the participants and their organizations, to the respective governments and to the UN.

This resolution was blocked. Objections to this resolution, which had been endorsed by the WRI women's core group, resulted in a petition that was presented to the organizers at the final plenary. The petition argued that holding the UN conference in China might be beneficial to the women there, and that most government violate human rights. It became clear that this resolution could not be agreed to by the whole body, so it was withdrawn from the list of unanimously approved resolutions that WRI would follow up on.



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WRI?

If you would like to know more about the nonviolent work of War Resisters' International, or the work of the WRI Women's Working Group, you can contact any of the women listed below.

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WOMEN ORGANIZE TO STOP WAR RAPES

"He hit me on the mouth. I fainted. When I came to, I was raped again. While I was still conscious I was raped by eight of them, and I don't know what happened afterward...One of them lay on me, pressing the barrel of his automatic weapon against my temple, looking into my eyes for a long time. Another man was running the blade of a knife over my breasts..."

Azra, age 15

"It looked like some kind of forest motel. The cabins were used as sentry boxes. The whole area was fenced with barbed wire....They raped us every night. There were nights when more than 20 of them came. They did all kinds of things to us...They raped and slaughtered some girls in front of us...I spent four months in that camp. It is a nightmare that cannot be described or understood."

Mirsada, age 17

[Accounts of Bosnian rape survivors taken from the US feminist magazine, Ms., Vol. III, No. 4, Jan. 1993]

Sexual violence against women and war go hand in hand. Militarists have always used the portrayal of sexual violence against women in their propaganda. In some cases rape is portrayed as a reward and a legitimate way to humiliate the 'enemy', as when pornographic films were shown before battle to Pakistani troops during Bangladesh's war of independence. In other cases, rape is used to prove that the 'enemy' is a barbarian, and all self-respecting men should therefore take up arms against him. Such propaganda uses women's pain towards the same end--to motivate men to join the military and fight. The systematic use of rape as a weapon of terror is also not new. During the US-supported Contra war in Nicaragua, an estimated 5,000 women were kidnapped and held in Contra camps, where they were constantly sexually abused. Their release was never an issue in negotiations for peace, and no one knows what happened to them. Their fate, like the fate of the women captured and sold towards the end of the war in Afghanistan, is unknown.

The mass rapes in Bosnia are different. For the first time, feminists are demanding that war rape be seen as a serious crime. Women on all sides of the conflict are standing up for other

women. They are denouncing rape and demanding an end to the war. This is in marked contrast to militarists, who use rape for propaganda and as a way of increasing involvement in war.

One feminist group actively involved in drawing international attention to war rape is Women in Black Against War, in Belgrade. "The war and national-state have drastically degraded the position of women," an October Women in Black Against War statement reads. "First of all, the majority of refugees are women, and wherever they are moved to, other women take care of them. War has brought rape and thousands of women from all different nationalities are the victims. The rise of nationalism has introduced new population policies, such as the restriction of abortion in Croatia, which is on the way in Serbia." Women in Black Against War have taken part in a nightly vigil for peace, which lasted for five months, in front of the Serbian Parliament. They participated in the 70,000-strong anti-war demonstration in April 1992, under the slogan "Don't Count On Us," where they collected money for the citizens of Sarajevo. Contact: Anti-War Center, Prote Mateje 6, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia. Tel/fax +38 11 431 298.

Anti-war women who work for SOS telefon za žene i decu žrtve nasilja (SOS telephone line for women and children victims of violence) in Belgrade are working to establish a center for women raped in war. They want to provide counseling and material help for rape survivors. "Nationalist hatred has spread from the front line to family relationships," they state. "Since rape has increased not only in the war zones but also in territories indirectly involved in the war, we consider the following war-related rapes: the rape of refugee women, the rape of wives and other women by war veterans, the rape of wives in inter-ethnic marriages, and rapes as a consequence of nationalist propaganda in the media (the post television news violence syndrome)." Contact: SOS telefon, DOB-Makedonska 18, 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia. Tel. +38 11 322 226.

Women in Croatia are also protesting war rape. On November 25, the International Day Against Violence Against Women, women members of the Anti-war Campaign of Croatia and the Independent Women's House of Zagreb issued the following protest:

"Embittered about the very fact that the sexual abuse of women is possible at all, and that these days it has become a part of the regular practice during the war in these areas, the perverted 'proof' of the warrior's power and the conqueror's strategy, too,

that rapists are already absolved of every responsibility for their crimes,

"We demand that all the camps, throughout former Yugoslavia, be immediately closed, especially those in which women are exposed to sexual abuse by warriors, to torture and to the worst forms of psychic and physical abuse, violence and humiliation;

"We demand that rape be treated as a war crime and therefore we demand that the 3rd section of the 4th Geneva Convention from 1949 regarding the legal protection of women war victims be changed;

"We demand the establishment of an Independent International Court whose responsibility would be to find out and punish those who are responsible for and who have committed such crimes against women;

"We appeal to all women's organizations--the international ones and non-governmental ones--to peace groups and to women's groups, to form independent women teams as soon as possible in order to help organize crisis centers for psychological and financial help and support to rape survivors. As for governments operating in these areas, we expect their help and cooperation, according to their authority and international conventions."
Contact: Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights,
Tkalciceva 38, 41000 Zagreb, Croatia. Tel.+38 41 422495. Fax +38 41 271143.

To demand that systematic rape be documented as a war crime; write to Professor Frits Kalshoven, Chairman, Commission of Experts on Former Yugoslavia, United Nations, Palais des Nations, Geneva 1211, Switzerland.



CONGRATULATIONS TO WRI WOMEN

SOLIDARITY WITH FOREIGN WOMEN FORCED INTO PROSTITUTION

Congratulations to Patsy Sørensen, a WRI woman from Belgium, for her work with foreign women brought into Belgium who are forced into prostitution. She was awarded the national Ribbuis Peletier Fonds Prize for her work, which she has persisted in despite threats from sex traffickers. Patsy helped to establish Payoke, a center for prostitutes in Antwerp, which gained national recognition in late October when King Boudewijn of Belgium visited. He spoke with former prostitutes from the Philippines, Morocco, Poland and Russia, who had been brought into Belgium under false pretences. The King was concerned that Belgium is becoming a center for the traffick in women. A national discussion on the issue began on March 8, 1991, when a Moroccan woman brought a legal complaint against the men who forced her into prostitution.

As a result of the visit, a Parliamentary commission will be created in Belgium to investigate the situation and to look into increased punishment for those who profit from the sex trade. Both Payoke and Le Nid, a center for prostitutes in Brussels, will receive financial support from the government and there is talk of a special department within the police to handle such cases.

"The main aim is setting up networks," said Paula D'Hondt, the Belgian Commissioner of Migrant Affairs, who accompanied the King during the visit. "It is important that we educate women in developing countries about the criminal practices of traffickers in women."

WRI WOMAN ELECTED PRESIDENT

Joanne Sheehan, a WRI Council member and a staff member of the War Resisters League's (US) New England office, has been elected President of the Institute for Community Economics (ICE). ICE works with community-based groups across the US to create and preserve permanently affordable housing. It offers technical assistance and low-interest loans to local nonprofit housing groups. Keep up the good work, Joanne!

NEWS

RAPES IN EX-YUGOSLAVIA

Rape and Sexual Abuse by Armed Forces, a report on the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war in ex-Yugoslavia, was released by Amnesty International on January 21. The report documents organized centers specifically set up for the rape of women by soldiers. The report does not conclude that rape was deliberately chosen as a weapon of war by top military leaders, but does state that local officers were aware of and condoned mass rapes. Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1, UK.

PACKET ON UN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

An information packet on the United Nations and women, with ideas on how to spread the Forward Looking Strategies developed during the UN's Decade for Women, is available from the National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO) for £3.50. The packet also contains information on the 1995 UN Women's Conference, which will deal with issues such as development, peace and violence against women. NAWO, 279/281 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BY, U.K.

HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY?

Purna Shova Chitrakar of Nepal, a participant at WRI's recent women's conference in Thailand, is collecting information on how International Women's Day (March 8) is celebrated by women around the world. Please send her information on how the event is celebrated in your country (by marches, public holiday, film festivals, etc.) and the history of the celebration: when the event first began, memorable celebrations, etc. The information will be used to update her book and to help spread awareness about the Day throughout Nepal. Contact: Purna Shova Chitrakar, c/o WODES, P.O. Box 5840, Balambu, Kalimat, Kathmandu, Nepal.

WOMEN AND PESTICIDES

Victims without Voices (US \$10) is a new book about the situation of women pesticide sprayers in Malaysia. The pesticide paraquat

is responsible for most poisonings in Malaysia, where some 225 people have died of pesticide poisoning between 1990 and 1991. The women interviewed in the book told of mixing pesticides with their bare hands and of painful eye and skin diseases after exposure. "We have no choice," said one woman, "we have to think of our families who need our income." Victims without Voice is the first of a seven-country case study on the impact of pesticides on women. Contact: Vasanthi Arumugam, Pesticide Action Network for Asia and the Pacific, P.O. Box 1170, 10850 Penang, Malaysia.

WOMEN AND NONVIOLENCE PROJECT

The Women and Nonviolence Project seeks to affirm nonviolent initiatives women are taking on different issues in different countries; provide a forum for women to share their strategies and experiences in nonviolent action; strengthen women's nonviolent networks; and encourage action as part of an international campaign on nonviolence. The Project, sponsored by the Life & Peace Institute, the sub-unit on Women in Church and Society of the World Council of Churches and the Women's Department of the Lutheran World Federation, will be a three-year process, carried out with the guidance of an international preparatory committee. An international meeting of 100 participants is planned for 1993 in Soweto, South Africa. Contact: Di McDonald, Network Information Project, 30 Westwood Road, Southampton, SO2 1DN, UK. Tel. +44 703 554434.



RESOURCES AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Freedom from Violence, edited by Margaret Schuler (354 pages, 1992), is a collection of 14 essays on violence against women (including an article by a WRI Women's Conference speaker, Siriporn Skrobaneek). Voices from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and the United States share their sources of inspiration and common threads of agreement about what needs to be done to confront the violence in women's lives in all its aspects: physical, social, economic, cultural and legal. Published by the United

Nations Development Fund for Women, PO Box 20109, Dag Hammarskjöld Convenience Center, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Gender Violence: A Development and Human Rights Issue by Charlotte Bunch and Roxanna Carrillo (42 pages, 1991) is an insightful look at the massive violence women face around the world and at how to put this on the human rights agenda. "Crimes such as these against any group other than women," the booklet begins, "would be recognized as a civil and political emergency as well as a gross violation of the victim's humanity." From the Center for Women's Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Ave., Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903, USA. FAX +1 908 932 1180. US \$5.

Gender Bias: Roadblock to Sustainable Development by Jodi L. Jacobson (64 pages, 1992) looks at the traditional roles of women as farmers and foresters and at how development programs ignore these roles. Such policies increase women's poverty and the poverty of their families. Well-researched and argued, this Worldwatch Paper (no.10) presents a new framework for development which places women where they belong--at the center. Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036, USA. \$5.

Ending Violence Against Women is a resource guide which includes an international list of organizations working to end violence against women and a bibliography. The guide is the result of a two-week consultation by 46 activists from around the world, designed to develop and disseminate strategies aimed specifically at confronting conditions that foster violence against women. The guide looks at ways different segments of society, from the media to religious leaders, can stop the violence, and at getting violence against women on the human rights agenda. The Global Fund for Women, 2480 Sand Hill Road, Suite 100, Menlo Park, CA 94025, USA. Tel. +1 415 854 0420.

Living Reconciliation, Making Peace: Women's Strategies Against Oppression, War and Armament (216 pages, 1992) are the proceedings of an International Women's Congress held March 1991. Ninety women from 32 countries met to exchange experiences of their work for peace and justice. From Peru, Germany, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Tunisia and elsewhere, women speak from the heart about working for peace. WRI women Alicia Calderón and Elisabeth Benzing helped to organize this gathering. Frauen in der Einen Welt (Women of One World), Postfach 210421, 8500 Nürnberg 21, Germany. Fax 911 595277.