

No 18

March 1995

WRI WOMEN



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

News from the Triennial
New Women's Rights Center in Croatia
Tibetan Nuns in Prison

**New Address: War Resisters International
5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, UK**

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

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now reach us at 5 Caledonian Road, London N1
9DX, UK. Tel. +44 171 278 4040; fax +44 171 278 0444
The Email address remains the same:
warresisters@gn.apc.org.**

GREETINGS!

This newsletter, the first for 1995, contains a report from the women's theme group at WRI's Triennial, held last December in Brazil. We're happy to report that women were very visible during the Triennial, and that seven out of the 12 available Council seats went to women. We have a poem from one of WRI's new Council members, MiX (from the State of Spain), whom many readers will know from the days she worked in the WRI office in London. We look forward to other contributions from women Council members, so readers will get to know them better.

We are also happy to note that there are tentative plans for the next WRI Women's Conference. The Conscientious Objectors' Support Group (COSG) of South Africa has been approached about hosting the conference, so stay tuned to upcoming issues of this newsletter for developments.

This year will see the newsletter change from a biannual publication to a quarterly newsletter. To accomplish this, we need your help. Please send us articles that you think anti-militarist women will be interested in reading, and news of your work. We are also interested in cartoons, poems, book reviews, drawings, debates....in short, we want to hear from you! You can send us news in English, German, French and Spanish. Starting with this issue, one or two main articles from each newsletter will be translated into German, French and Spanish, and inserted into the newsletter, to be mailed to non-English speaking readers. We hope this will help make the newsletter more accessible and useful. We welcome your feedback about this experiment, and encourage any other suggestions as to how we can make the newsletter a better tool for women's communication and organizing.

The date for next WRI Council meeting is not quite definite (it may be in July or the second week of August), but it will be held in San Sebastian/Donostia, in the Basque country. The WRI Women's Working Group will have a meeting one day before the start of the Council. You can contact the London office for more information. We hope to see you there!

Shelley Anderson

MAKING WOMEN VISIBLE: A REPORT FROM THE WRI TRIENNIAL

by Maggie Helwig

“Our daily lives must be visible,” says Stasa. “They must become international policy. It is my international policy that Haya comes to my house. That is my government.”

Stasa, from Belgrade, and Haya, from Jerusalem, were both part of the theme group on women’s work against violence at the War Resisters International’s Triennial in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil, held in December 1994. Although the group’s conclusions cannot be summed up in any brief form, Stasa’s words do express a fundamental principle underlying much of what was said.

WOMEN IN BRAZIL

Two of the national coordinators of SERPAJ/Brazil (Servicio y Justicia--the Latin American peace and justice network) were also part of the women’s discussion group. The two were Mariene Pantoja from Manaus, in the Amazon, and Maria da Penha from Brasilia. The work of these women is directly rooted in Brazilian women’s daily lives; they are both community workers, whose primary responsibility is organizing among poor women. But they are also very aware of how the concrete details of these daily lives underpin a national and international economic system; and how much of the economic exploitation suffered by Brazilian women and children is made possible by a whole chain of factors. These factors are rooted in traditional beliefs about women’s appropriate role and behavior.

Mariene is of indigenous descent. She was not raised in an indigenous culture and only recently came to identify with this heritage, which is a source of inspiration for her. She lived in the Manaus slums and first became involved in politics through protests around housing issues. She was not a pacifist. Though she never carried a gun, she believed that armed force would be necessary to overturn oppression. She credits her gradual conversion to nonviolence to a local minister who “kept coming and talking to me about nonviolence all the time.... Finally I said, okay, I’ll give it a try.” Her own experience of nonviolently confronting armed policemen led her into an deepening conviction that unarmed activism, although slower and less exciting, is the only way forward.

“Women in Brazil haven’t discovered their power to work together,” she says. “But I believe that women have more potential for change. We have more patience, more hope and stronger resistance.” She is involved in a group discussing women’s rights and their relation to other social issues, which includes “washerwomen to lawyers”, but “it’s difficult...the popular movement in Brazil has regressed because of economic policies; people don’t organise if they’re starving, and there is such high unemployment. In Manaus, in our office we have one typewriter and one filing cabinet. We’re trying to support ourselves by producing indigenous foods and handicrafts for sale.”

WOMEN’S BODIES, WOMEN’S LIVES

Mariene and Maria both talk about the policy of mass sterilizations in Brazil, carried out partly with US funding, which peaked in 1992. This was one of the many programs designed to “control” the Third World’s population. It is part of a larger national and international program of social control.

Mariene and Maria estimate that thousands of Brazilian women were sterilized without their knowledge or consent; even now, women are often asked to present a certificate of sterilization to get a job, so the employer won’t have to worry about pregnancy leave or childcare. “Economic oppression implies many things--sterilization, sexuality, workers’ rights.” All of these are interlocked.

Maria spoke about Brazilian machismo, and how it functions not only to excuse domestic violence (even to the point of murder), but also as part of the economic system, providing the rationale for women’s drastically lower pay. “They say women have to



graphic: Sr. Helen David
Bracanto, Pax Christi USA

stay at home because it's safe. But there is more violence at home than in the streets." Mariene also described a cycle of men leaving their families because they can't support them ("an insult to their manhood"); travelling to find work and starting new families elsewhere, leaving the previous wives and children entirely unsupported; then, sometimes, leaving their new families as well.

Maria and Mariene found much common ground with Saswati Roy, a WRI Women's Working Group core member since the women's conference in Bangkok in 1992, and a community worker in India. Though Saswati and the SERPAJ women live on the other side of the world, they shared experiences and ideas on topics ranging from the process of "conscientisation", literacy training, and alternative economic models, to dealing with husbands who object to their wives becoming educated and active.

Another area where there was intense discussion was the subject of nationalism, the not-always-clear distinctions between nationalism and a peoples' self-determination, and the relationship of both of these to the self-determination of individual women.

WOMEN AT THE TRIENNIAL—AND THE NEXT WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Women were very visible at the Triennial--though few of the many other theme groups dealt with the issue of gender as it related to their topic in any serious way. (This reflects, perhaps, our own difficulty in maintaining a balance between ensuring that women have a space of our own, and seeing to it that our concerns are not relegated just to women-only groups. This complex problem was also discussed in the theme group.) More than half the plenary speakers were women, and seven women were elected to the 12 seats of the WRI Council.

The WRI Women's Working Group (WWG) also held a meeting during the Triennial. The main topic for discussion was the very exciting possibility that the next 5th WRI Women's Conference (which may be jointly co-sponsored with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation) will be held in South Africa in the not-too-distant future. Although still in the exploratory stage, WWG women can expect a letter about this possibility soon. Shelley Anderson and Maggie Helwig are acting jointly as the coordinators, and you can contact either of them for more information.

Contact: Maggie Helwig, WRI, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1, UK. Tel. +44 171 278 4040; fax +44 171 278 0444; email: warresisters@gn.apc.org or **Shelley Anderson**, IFOR, Spoorstraat 38, NL-1815 BK, Alkmaar, the Netherlands. Tel. +31 72 123014; fax +31 72 151102; email: ifor@gn.apc.org.

WOMAN IN AN UPRIGHT FLIGHT

[New WRI Council member MiX sent this poem, which is based on a dream she had of a woman floating upright, eight inches from the ground. 'I've talked with other women about our dreams,' MiX writes, "and wondered whether we all have 'historical dreams', that is, dreams generated by the times we live in. I interpreted this dream as one of those historical dreams, feeling completely linked to those banned ones living in an insane world. '']

Taking the worn-out bend of the mansion of the slaves,
the wild woman moves forward
opening her way through the air with her arms.
The copper shapes
that rendered solid the artist's muscles are in her body
naked fish of mud, alive: in the red sands and the water
these are wheat tassels, magnolia buds, lavender,
these are weaving spiders, lonely crows so kind,
containing the very first instant of creation.
There are ferns and flowers, membranes, breath of the she-bear
blood of the winged and rough mare, steppe tiger saliva,
ivory sands of the elephant, seals, dolphins, whales, mammoths
caves of sanctuary light, insects and moss, winds, beetles.
Like the tension of the buck in flight, her muscles
beneath the wet and warm beam of her gaze. The virtuality
of a slow flight a palm from the ground after taking the bend,
before the insane step of the military could be heard,
those who tombstoned that kind and cold numb call
to the room of the slaves chained to the bitter hospital beds.
And to take the bend not carrying the bags of hunger,
not having touched the chains so they would split open
like laden fruits,
free from the tension of the weapon that brings terror forward,
gone, alone, yours, the tension of the intimate flight of
flesh divided
from the unreal world manifesting itself in bodies and things,
you spill yourself inwards like a calm wave and fly
but opening your path with the most human muscles,
with life,
pounding a whole, complete, flying a palm away from the ground.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP FOR WOMEN IN CROATIA

B.a.B.e. (Be active, Be emancipated) is a human rights centre for women, located in Zagreb and initiated by the Zagreb Women's Lobby. Our mission is to enhance understanding and foster the spirit and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in ways that are culturally relevant and integral to women's lives in Croatia. Advocacy, monitoring, and education activities will be used to increase the visibility and understanding of women's human rights at the grassroots level, to expand pressure for government accountability and to encourage women to assume leadership roles in the policy decisions which affect their lives.

We will monitor and take action to influence legislation which impacts upon women and the election process in general. We will also lobby for the recognition and improved status of women's rights such as:

- The right to be free of violence, both at home and in the public sphere.
- The right to reproductive choice and reproductive health, including the decision of when to create and how to raise children.
- The right to equal and full participation in all aspects of society, especially in important decision making and leadership roles.

We will use international standards and treaties, as well as Croatian laws and the Croatian constitution, to evaluate the position of women in Croatia and to point out inconsistencies between laws as they are written and as they are put into practice. We believe that gender democracy is an essential part of any democracy. A state which denies equal opportunity and equal protection to women or to minority groups cannot call itself democratic.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

We are working on a campaign for women's political rights to help women fight discrimination and to make political procedures more democratic. Disturbing conservative and nationalistic trends in Croatia are threatening women's place in Croatian society. The government is passing restrictive laws to slowly erase women from the public sphere and force us back into the home. Already, women have been almost

entirely driven out of the mostly male parliament, leaving us powerless to influence legislation from within.

As a "watchdog" for women's rights, B.a.B.c. will closely monitor candidates during elections and promote those who will represent and protect women's rights. We will also monitor electoral procedures and laws, and lobby on behalf of women, and try to develop female candidates for parliament; and raise political awareness by publishing pamphlets and organising public events, workshops, meetings, roundtable discussions, and press conferences. We will also hold workshops for women leaders in NGOs and other organisations to teach them how they can influence the political process.

Our goal is to change the election process from a competition in patriotism to representation of public needs--from nationalistic rhetoric to true democracy.

'I MYSELF HAVE NEVER BEEN
ABLE TO FIND OUT PRECISELY
WHAT FEMINISM IS: I ONLY
KNOW THAT PEOPLE CALL ME
A FEMINIST WHENEVER I
EXPRESS SENTIMENTS THAT
DIFFERENTIATE ME FROM
A DOOR MAT ...'

REBECCA WEST

REFUGEES RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

We are producing folders for distribution to refugees and displaced persons which will give general information about their options and rights. The folders can be distributed to refugees and displaced persons directly or through other organisations. The folders will include an introduction of B.a.B.e.; a directory of women's groups, refugee groups, UN agencies, Croatian agencies, emergency numbers, peace groups, human rights groups, organisations to trace relatives, other refugee camps (telling which are transit camps, etc.); illustrations of where to go to get new papers, medical care, work permits, etc. A flow chart will also illustrate the options that refugees in Croatia can choose (go to a 3rd country, to stay in the 2nd country, or voluntary repatriation). There will also be personal narratives and local tips, and a booklet describing refugee rights. This will explain that international conventions obligate the Croatian government to provide certain things.

LEGAL EDUCATION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

We will produce folders on women's rights under Croatian and International law to be distributed to unions and to women around Croatia. These folders will educate women about their legal rights in the workplace and at home with materials on non-discrimination, maternity leave, sexual harassment, domestic violence, abortion, equality in wages and employment, health care, etc. We will hold public events for distribution of the folders and to raise awareness about women's rights.

The folders will also include a general pamphlet called "Why Women? Why Rights? Why Now?" which discusses the concept of women's rights and the relationship between Croatian and international law.

LEGAL ADVICE HOTLINE

In September 1994 we started a legal advice hotline tentatively set for Wednesdays from 4 PM until 6 PM, staffed by assistant judges and law students who advise women on their rights and legal remedies. Advice is limited to issues such as domestic violence, rape and refugee rights.

We also want to design a poster campaign for children, to teach children about women's human rights. There will be three levels: 6-10, 10-14, and 14-18 (corresponding to grade levels) and we will solicit prizes from foundations and companies (such as art

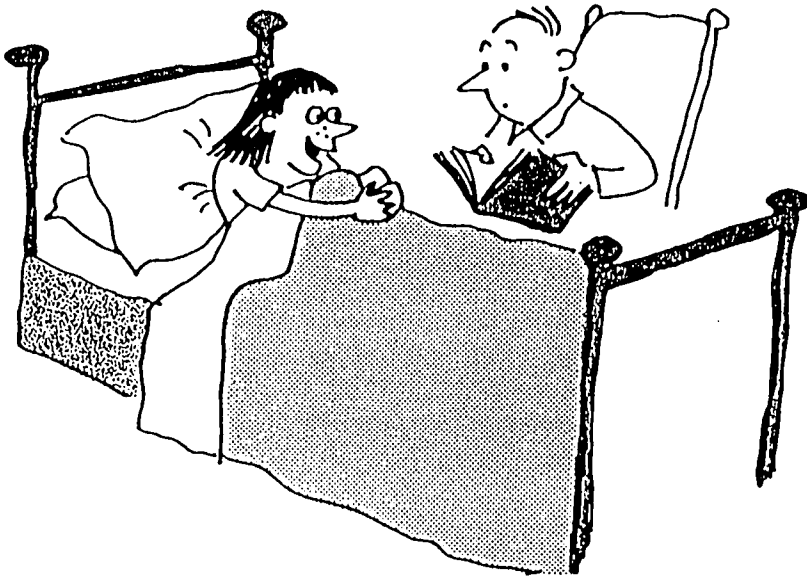
supplies or a trip to Budapest). We hope to list other Croatian and International organisations as sponsors.

Using the incentives of exciting prizes, we hope that boys and girls will teach themselves about women's rights and begin to question stereotypical roles for women and girls.

There will also be an essay competition for law students, with a choice of titles. This will encourage students of law to begin to think critically about their studies and the position of women's human rights in Croatia. The beginning of educating the Croatian human rights lawyers of the future!

B.a.B.c., c/o Zenska Infoteka, Berislaviceva 14, 41000 Zagreb, Croatia. Tel. +385 41 271 247; fax +385 41 422 276.

Read me the one where women and men
work the same hours, do the same jobs
and get equal pay... I LOVE fairy tales!



cartoon by Redna Chadwick

ONE STEP FORWARD

by Julie Mertus

On Wednesday, 16 November 1994, Arkadia's lesbian activist Lepa Mladjenovic, appeared on the local television show called "Nus pojave" ("Incidentals"). That was the first time in Serbian history that an official representative of a lesbian and gay group took part in a public TV show. Another guest of the show was Wendy Eastwood, British lesbian feminist, presently living in Novi Sad (Vojvodina-Serbia).

The main subject was lesbians and feminism in Serbia, although the discussion also included issues of differences between gays and lesbians in general, lesbian subculture and marriage and family.

Wendy Eastwood pointed out that through active Gay and Lesbian support of other minorities and oppressed peoples in Britain, there is sometimes active support and sympathy from these people against British homophobic laws. She also explained that discrimination against lesbians doesn't exist only because of their sexuality, but also because of their gender role in society.

"Arkadija is against any kind of discrimination. We are suffering enormous discrimination from our society, and therefore we feel that we are obligated to support all of those who are in the same or similar position", Lepa Mladjenovic explained one of the main principles of Arkadia's policy.

The show lasted for more than hour, and it was shown on prime time on the Art Channel. So far, the reaction to the show has been positive. Several viewers commented that Ms. Mladjenovic and Ms. Eastwood were pleasant and "perfectly O.K." "At least they liked us," Ms. Mladjenovic remarked after the show, "We tried to present a positive image of lesbians and I think we succeeded."

Just one more step towards visibility of Yugoslav lesbians!

Julie Mertus is a human rights lawyer working in Belgrade. Email address: JULIE.MERTUS@ZAMIR-BG.comlink.apc.org

DEATH IS NOT ALWAYS DYING

by Susan Giesen

Why are you so afraid?

It's all this war talk.
My sons will all be draft age
very soon. I can't bear the
thought of them--

*Of them what? Are you afraid
of them being shot?*

No.

*Are you afraid of them being
disabled, losing an arm, a leg,
being blinded?*

It's not that. I could live with
that and so could they.

*It must be death that you fear
so much. The thought of losing
them.*

No, it's much worse than that.

What could be worse than that?

I've seen soldiers come home.
It's the look in their eyes. My
sons have never had that look,
and I don't ever want to see it
in their eyes.

What look?

Emptiness. Like their souls
have been raped, and their spirits
smothered. They are walking tombs.

*You see too many movies, and
read too much.*

If I had never seen a movie
or read one book, I would still
know that this is true. My heart tells
me that my children can die
for another, but they cannot kill
without becoming their own enemy.

There are more ways than one
to be dead.

Reprinted with permission from
Grounds for Peace, an anthology of
writings by the members of Women
Against Military Madness (WAMM)
and Women Poets of the Twin
Cities, 1994 (US \$10). WAMM is a
10-year old grassroots women's
peace organization that has
pioneered empowerment training for
women. Contact: WAMM, 310 E.
38th St., Suite 225, Minneapolis,
Minnesota 55409, USA.

MEN FOR GENDER AWARENESS

It is more than a decade now since a small group of Thai women began to systematically raise gender questions. They had to struggle against all kinds of difficulties. First they had to clarify for themselves what the reality of the situation was between men and women and what kind of relationship they wanted between them, both universally and in the Thai context. Next, they had to decide what they should do to address related problems. At the same time, they had to raise the awareness of other women on the issues, create alliances and build a women's movement to address the rights and welfare of women. And, not least, they had to struggle against resistance or even hostile counterattacks from men who dominated society.

In the last few decades many men have been exposed to debates and various forms of educational processes on women's issues in the different social movements that have formed. One wonders, then, why there has been an absence of men supporting women's causes, considering the fact that there have always been caring fathers, brothers, relatives and male friends.

In other countries, many men on their own initiative or influenced by the women's movement, have realized that it was men's own patriarchal views that cause of many of today's problems--problems such as economic inequality, family abuse, and sexual abuse. Some men have begun to speak out and take action against these problems. In Australia, men formed groups such as Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) and Men Against Patriarchy (MAP) as forums. These groups educated the public, especially men, and lobbied decision makers, as well as provided support. They do not exclude the help of women or even women's participation. However, men do feel that by keeping the groups as 'men's groups', it is easier and more effective for men to help each other and to take action.

Something similar has happened in Thailand. Some men have taken action in support of women's equality. These men are from nearly all walks of life--government officials, teachers, academics, monks and priests, lawyers, journalists, painters, singers, writers and nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers. With increasing awareness of human rights in Thai society and the current debates on gender-related issues like prostitution, a number of these men feel that the time is ripe to form a men's group in Thailand.

After several discussions among both men and women friends, a core group of three people consisting of Phra Mahasomchai Kusonrajitto, the Vice-Rector of Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University, Piphop Udomitthiphong from the Thai Interreligious Committee for Development, and Chris McMahon from the Social Support for

International Women came together. They agreed to play a central role in coordinating people who are interested in setting up a men's group. This group intends to promote gender awareness among men and to work towards an understanding by men of themselves, of other men, and of relationships between men and women. The group's name, especially the Thai one, has changed several times in order to avoid misunderstanding. At an October 3, 1993 meeting, the group agreed to call itself Men for Gender Awareness (MEGA). The group's formation, if not historic, is certainly unique in Thailand.

More than ten women have participated among the 30 people who've come to the last four meetings. MEGA intends to be a men's group for the same reasons men's groups have formed in other countries. They feel that it is easier for men to accept suggestions and criticisms from other men, and for the group to take action on gender issues. MEGA shares the belief that patriarchy is the root cause of many problems in Thai society. The group will mainly target men in an attempt to raise their awareness. Women can help as advisers and/or participate in many of the group's activities.

MEGA's objectives are:

- a. To arrange activities that will enable men to be more sensitive to each other and toward women, in order to find peace in themselves and in society.
- b. To cooperate with various organizations and individuals to campaign among men for greater gender understanding.
- c. Provide emotional support for members
- d. Support other groups and individuals working for greater understanding between women and men.

Monks and laypeople, foreigners and Thais are welcome to join the group. Members are encouraged to initiate their own activities, in MEGA's name, without having to consult other members, on the basis of mutual trust. "If we want to achieve a better understanding between men and women," a Buddhist monk said, "we should start with ourselves first and then turn to our family, friends and so on. The most important thing is that men should understand themselves and that will help them to understand women because men's sufferings are similar to women's sufferings."

To attract new members, the group will write letters to newspapers, organize seminars and public talks, and direct campaigns to publicize their work.

The core group, many of whom work full time, will try to come up with ideas to offer to others. Every two months the core group meeting will be expanded to an open forum so non-members can attend. Resource people will be invited to lead discussions at these open forums on specific topics. On April 14, Thai Family Day, information was distributed about the group.

Some prominent Thai personalities, including attorneys, human rights activists and singers, have agreed to act as senior advisers to the group.

It was decided that the group should remain small for a few years and work toward developing a grassroots network, rather than aim for an organizational structure immediately. This is how women's groups have developed into permanent structures. MEGA has already gained the support of several other organizations.

There has been discussion about a campaign against prostitution. Campaigns in the past have mostly been done by women's groups, reflecting a women's perspective on the issue. A campaign against prostitution led by a men's group would lend more legitimacy. It is also one of the more obvious issues that all people, including men, can campaign against.

MEGA members feel that we should emphasize family values and related ideas, religious and secular. For instance, the third precept (a basic moral code adhered to by all Buddhists) is to abstain from sexual misconduct. One of MEGA's goals is to educate men that buying sex from a prostitute does not show manliness. Instead, it is treating women as sex objects and destroying their families, mentally and physically. The most common way to spread AIDS in Thailand is through heterosexual intercourse between men, prostitutes and wives. A MEGA campaign against prostitution would contribute to changing men's attitudes and behavior, consequently reducing the spread of AIDS.

MEGA's first bi-monthly meeting, in November 1993, looked at the proposed Prostitution Suppression Bill, then under review by the Thai House of Representatives. For the first time, this bill would make it illegal for a man to buy sex from a prostitute. MEGA members educated themselves both about the issue and about how to lobby decision makers. Contact: Men For Gender Awareness, 124 Wat Thong Nopphakhun, Somdej Cheophraya Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Tel. +662 437 9445; fax +66 2 437 9450.

Reprinted from the Friends of Women English-language publication, FOW Newsletter, available for US \$10 (international money order) from Friends of Women, 1379/30 Soi Praditchai, Phahonyothin Road, Samsen-nai, Bangkok 10400, Thailand.

NEWS

THE CLOTHESLINE PROJECT

The idea is simple. The result is chilling. The Clothesline Project is collecting 250,000 shirts, designed by women survivors of violence, their families and friends. The shirts--T-shirts, sweatshirts, children's blouses--are sometimes decorated with poems or drawings by abused children, and sometimes with photographs of women who died from being battered. The shirts will be displayed during the Actions to Stop Violence Against Women in Washington DC, April 8-9, as an attempt to educate the public about violence against women. The Clothesline Project National Network has also produced a "Sounds of Sexism" tape, which beeps and whistles at appropriate intervals demonstrating how often US women are raped, beaten and killed.

INSTITUTE FOR BLACK WOMEN

The 7th International Cross-cultural Black Women's Studies Summer Institute will focus its July 16-27, 1995 conference on "Pacific Women: Culture, Identity and Self-Determination". Among other issues, the conference will look at strategies activists are using to build a nuclear-free and independent Pacific. Emphasis will be placed on celebrating women's leadership. Contact: Black Women's Summer Institute, Information Headquarters, Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, 1150 Carroll St., Brooklyn, NY 11225, USA. ATTN: Dr. A McLaughlin. Fax +1 718 270 5126.

WAR CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

The U.N.'s International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia office of the prosecutor affirmed on September 8, 1994, that investigations of sex crimes against women are underway. Members of the Tribunal stressed their desire to prosecute "crimes against humanity and genocide."

The Tribunal also maintained that the majority of war crimes are committed against women and as a result, rape and sexual offenses are being addressed. However, prosecutor Justice Richard Goldstone stressed that the creation of a sex crimes unit would "believe the broadness of our approach." Instead of a separate unit focusing on the overwhelming number of sexual crimes against women, the Tribunal hired several

staff members who are well trained in the area. In addition, Goldstone stated that a “cultural-specific gender training is under consideration for our lawyers, investigators and interpreters.” The Tribunal is not willing to appoint a second Deputy Prosecutor; Goldstone stated that they are “committed to using the talent and experience of its female staff in senior and productive positions.” Goldstone believes that an increase in Tribunal funds would facilitate the investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes.

Action: Write to Goldstone, at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Churchillplein 1, PO Box 13888, 2501 EW The Hague, Netherlands. Fax +31 70 344 5358. Urge him to see that sex crimes are dealt with effectively. Stress the importance of the cultural-specific gender sensitivity training. Recommend an increase in women involved in the investigation and prosecution processes.

Source: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Legislative Hotline, 1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-1691, US. Tel. +1 215 563 7110; fax +1 215 563 5527.

Violence Against Homeless Women

During last summer, homeless women living on the pavement of Uingeni Road outside the Durban train station in South Africa was plagued by attacks from local thugs known as tsotsis. The violence was so bad that the women took turns sleeping at the end of the bench outside the station, knowing that the woman sleeping at the end is likely to be raped. One woman saw a tsotsi dragging a young girl toward the portable toilets, another dangerous area, and shouted that she would call the police. The station had no telephone, and the woman believed that even if she had been able to call, the police would not come. A police station is located a few blocks away from the train station, but police do not patrol the area, leaving the women without protection.

The new South African Bill of Rights sets forth in section 8(1) the right to equal protection of the law, as does article 7 of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All women are entitled to police protection from rape and other violence, yet poor and homeless women are still vulnerable to attack. An international letter writing campaign was launched, asking officials to provide protection for the women by instituting a regular patrol, investigating reports of rape, and arresting those responsible. Contact: Equality Now, P.O. Box 20646, Columbus Circle Station, New York, NY 10023, USA.

TIBETAN WOMEN IN JAIL

“We demonstrate with our bare hands as we are fighting for the truth. If we have truth on our side, we don't need any weapon.” One of the Gari 14

On March 12, 1994 the International Year of Tibetan Women was inaugurated in Dharamsala, India, home of the Tibetan government in exile. The Year will last until March 12, 1995, and is dedicated to finding nonviolent solutions to the problems women inside Tibet and in exile face.

The Year honors the 35th anniversary of the women's uprising against China's occupation of Tibet. On March 12, 1959, over 15,000 women marched through Lhasa to demand the withdrawal of Chinese troops and to appeal for support from foreign consulates in the Tibetan capital. Tibetan solidarity groups estimates that thousands of women died or were imprisoned in the ensuing Chinese attempt to stop the uprising. Despite the repression women, and especially Buddhist nuns, have remained at the forefront of the nonviolent Tibetan independence movement. Forty-nine of the 120 known independence protests inside Tibet since 1987 have been led by nuns.

There were approximately 700 nunneries, and 27,000 nuns, in Tibet before the occupation: almost all the nunneries have since been razed, and most of the nuns killed, imprisoned or expelled. Many nuns were expelled for performing religious acts with nationalist overtones, such as throwing barley into the air or singing certain songs. Expelled nuns are forbidden from wearing monastic robes and performing religious ceremonies. They cannot leave their village without a local government travel permit.

THE GARI 14

Some 200 nuns are associated with Gari, a surviving nunnery outside Lhasa. Gari, like other monasteries and nunneries in Tibet, has seen an increase in restrictive government control since 1987. Finances, curriculum and enrollment are all overseen by the government; young women who wish to become nuns may be publicly humiliated by Chinese authorities in an attempt to dissuade them.

Some 50 nuns from Gari, or about a quarter of the nunnery, are in prison. Among the more recent prisoners from Gari are Ngawang Yangkyi and Gyaltsen Tsultrim, both 22. They were arrested in June 1993 for starting a pro-independence demonstration in Lhasa. Ten days later 12 other nuns--the youngest 15-years-old--were arrested for allegedly taking part in another independence demonstration. According to the Canada

Tibet Committee, the Gari nuns have been 'subjected to intense scrutiny' and 'reeducation campaigns,' the result of increased surveillance of suspected dissidents by the Chinese Public Security Bureau.

According to Amnesty International, the torture of Tibetans in detention is endemic. Tibetan women in detention are routinely tortured and subjected to sexual violence. This, and the forced labor in prison and the lack of proper medical care, often leaves the women unable to continue their life as nuns. Their suffering has been increased by a new Chinese regulation banning nuns who have been arrested from returning to their nunnery.

WRITE asking for the immediate and unconditional release of the Gari nuns and all Tibetan prisoners of conscience if they have not been given fair trials in accordance with international standards, including access to lawyers of their choice: Minister Jia Chunwang, Ministry of State Security, Jia Chungwang Anquanbuzhang, 14 Dongchang'anlu, Dongchenqu, Beijingshi 100741, People's Republic of China.

Contact: the Tibetan Women's Association, McLeodganj, Dharamsala, HP, India. fax +91 1892 4213; email: tw@cta.unv.cnet.in, to see in what other ways you can help.