

WRI WOMEN

No 20

October 1995



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



..MujerEmpress

Women Overcoming Violence in Russia
Sex Tourism in Cuba
Attack on Peace Activist in Serbia

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

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GREETINGS

This issue of the WRI Women's Working Group Newsletter contains a report on sex tourism in Cuba, on a violent attack against a lesbian peace activist in Yugoslavia, and on violence against women in Russia. It also contains news of how women are working to stop violence, especially the violence of the undeclared war against women.



The next issue of the newsletter will include reports on the WRI's council meeting in the Basque country, and on how the lobbying to improve the peace section of the Platform for Action (the final document of the UN's 4th World Conference on Women) went in Beijing. Several book reviews of recent books on the mass rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, on 'comfort' women, and on testimonies of women in war areas, will also be included.

You can help us spread the word about how women are fighting violence by translating articles from this newsletter into your own language. Please contact Domi at the WRI office in London if you are interested in translating articles and news, especially into French, German and Spanish. We can make photocopies of your translation and send it to other women on the mailing list.

The annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is also coming up. This global campaign to stop violence against women begins on November 25, the international day against violence against women. This day was declared by the first feminist encuentro for Latin American and the Caribbean in 1981 (Columbia). The day commemorates the Mirabel sisters who were brutally murdered by the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic in 1960. The campaign ends on December 10, the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The campaign includes World AIDS Day (December 1) and the anniversary of the Montreal (Canada) massacre, when a gun man killed 14 women engineering students for being feminist (December 6). For more information on the campaign contact the Center for Women's Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Avenue, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903, USA (tel. +1 908 932 8782; fax +1 908 932 1180; email cwgl@igc.apc.org).

Shelley Anderson

SEX TOURISM IN CUBA

by Julia O'Connell Davidson

Cuba is currently facing grave problems because of the continuing U.S. blockade and the collapse of Soviet economic support. The country is desperate for foreign exchange, and is looking to the tourist industry as a means to secure it. Cuban tourism has rapidly expanded with 1.7 million visitors in 1993. Though successfully generating foreign exchange, the vast majority of Cubans are suffering enormous hardship. Food rations ensure only the most basic minimum to stave off starvation, and many basic commodities such as clothing, soap, cooking oil and pain killers are often unavailable.

In the midst of all this, luxurious enclaves exist where goods and services are readily available for tourists. A 'black' market in currency and in many of the goods that are officially intended for tourist has developed. Officially, US \$ 1 is equivalent to 1 peso, but on the 'black' market, the value of the US dollar is between 35 and 40 pesos. Cuban wages are generally somewhere between 250 and 400 pesos per month. Many basic necessities can only be obtained for hard currency from tourist shops or 'black' market entrepreneurs. It is not surprising that many women and girls, as well as some men and boys, are prepared to grant tourists (the most accessible source of hard currency) sexual access in exchange for cash, even for drinks or a restaurant meal.

This report on the growing sex tourism in Cuba is based on interviews conducted in March 1995 in Havana, Varedero and Santiago de Cuba by myself and Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor.

PROSTITUTION IN CUBA

Prostitution in Cuba today differs both from prostitution in Western countries and Thailand. The post 1959 Cuban state tried to outlaw prostitution, but also attempted to remedy the conditions which create a supply of sex workers (i.e., poverty, absence of educational and employment opportunities for women, etc.), means that, at present, the sale of sexual services in Cuba does not take place within an established institutional and organisational framework. In other countries (especially those where the links between prostitution and the entertainment, leisure and tourist industries are well developed), most sex workers are forced into one of a variety of indirect employment with pimps, brothel keepers, massage parlour or bar owners - third parties who then exert a powerful influence over the prostitute-client exchange.

In Cuba there is no network of brothels, no organised system of bar prostitution, in fact, third party involvement in the organisation of prostitution is rare. Most women and girls are prostituting themselves independently. Since she is usually desperate, and he does not have to satisfy the greed of a third party, he can secure sexual access to her very cheaply. In Cuba, professional prostitutes will open negotiations by asking for \$10 for oral sex or short fuck, but can often be beaten down to as little as US \$2 to \$4. Inexperienced women and girls can be persuaded and/or tricked into spending a whole night with a client for the cost of a meal, a few drinks or small gift.

Sex tourists state that it costs them less to spend two weeks indulging themselves in Cuba than it does in other centres of sex tourism, such as the Philippines and Thailand. This is partly because they are not paying a third party and partly because competition between prostitutes lowers prices. Prostitutes will entice tourists away from each other with offers of better deals (for example, cheap accommodation plus sexual access, rather than cheap sexual access alone).

Although very few prostitutes are directly controlled and organised by pimps, they are indirectly exploited. Prostitution is only viable in tourist centres, and many women and girls therefore migrate to Havana, Varedero, Santiago de Cuba and Santa Lucia from inland villages. Though official residents of these cities and resorts are entitled to housing, migrants are not. They must find somewhere to stay in order to work and to avoid police harassment. 'Black' market renters have been quick to exploit this. In



Varedero, landlords are charging between \$2 and \$4 a night for substandard accommodation. This pressures the tenant to seek a continuous stream of paying clients, and reduces her net income from them, thus locking her into prostitution as a means of day to day survival.

One consequence of this is that the women and girls who sell sex to tourists are not a homogeneous group. Those who are legitimate residents of a tourist centre can often elect to supply their sexual 'labour' on an infrequent basis, and for very specific ends (e.g., some cooking oil and meat, some children's clothes, even simply a night out). Their economic disadvantage is still being exploited by sex tourists, of course, and their freedom limited, but women in this situation have more choices than migrants exploited by landlords and sex tourists alike. This latter group (which includes girls aged 14 and 15) are even more desperate for dollars and therefore more vulnerable.

Cubans do not typically refer to the women, girls and men who grant tourists sex in exchange for dollars and/or other benefits as putas (prostitutes or bitches), but as jiniteras. This literally translates as 'jockeys', and is used because of the way in which such people are perceived by some to be 'riding' tourists.

SEX TOURISTS IN CUBA

Sex tourism is often a means to satisfy very specific sexual preferences. Many men choose to travel to particular destinations because they know that it is possible to pursue their tastes more cheaply and safely. Paedophiles are an obvious example of this type of sex tourist, but more common are men who have a preference for experiencing multiple, anonymous sexual encounters with teenagers and women in their early 20s. Other men do not travel specifically to buy sexual services, but do enter into sexually exploitative relationships with local women as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Alongside and often overlapping these groups, there are men who have very specific 'racialised'-sexual fantasies. They travel in order to secure cheap, easy sexual access to 'Oriental', Asian, Black or Latino women, men and/or children.

Cuba does not, as yet, appear to cater to men who buy sex from very young children. Although we found no evidence of pre-teen prostitution in Cuba, sexual access to girls between the ages of 14 and 16 is not difficult to attain, and girls between the ages of 16 and 18 are very accessible. We met 14 and 15 year old prostitutes working in Varedero who reported that a number of their Italian, Canadian and German clients make between three and five trips to Cuba per year. More disturbing still, such tourists are paying older Cuban women and men, often prostitutes themselves, to procure 14 and 15 year old girls for them. This practice is probably not as widespread as it is in other sites of sex tourism, and as yet it relies on individual 'initiative' rather than being an

organised system of recruitment. However, it does mean that young girls from the more economically desperate inland towns are being encouraged to migrate to tourist centres to prostitute themselves. Inexperienced and without either language skills or knowledge about prostitution, these 'new' girls are very vulnerable.

The sex tourists who are primarily interested in Cuban girls aged 16 and over can be divided into two main groups: those who acknowledge the instrumental nature of their relationships (Macho men), and sex tourists who tend to deny it (Mr Averages and Right On Backpackers). The hostile sexuality of the former group can be encapsulated in the motto 'Find them, feed them, fuck them, forget them'. The majority of Macho male tourists in Cuba we saw were Italian, Spanish and Canadian, but British package tour operators are beginning to promote Cuba as a 'beach party' holiday destination, and a US-based company that publishes a book and electronic newsletter entitled *Travel & the Single Male* identifies Cuba as a new 'hot destination for the adventurous single male'. Macho sex tourists are typically happy to enter into fairly explicit transactions with the young women who approach them, generally offering (but not always actually paying) between \$20 and \$40 plus meals for 12 to 24 hours of access to her person. In exchange, they expect at least one night and one morning fuck. They often prefer to 'pick up' in the late evening, thereby saving the expense of buying the woman dinner, and, depending upon how much they like the particular woman, will 'drop' her after breakfast.

Not all sex tourists prefer multiple, relatively anonymous encounters. Some can only attain sexual and psychological satisfaction from a woman's body if they tell themselves that they are involved in a reciprocal relationship. Mr Averages and Right On Backpackers tend to spend several days or even weeks with the same woman and are keen to conceal the economic basis of the relationship from themselves. They do not wish to see themselves as clients, and cannot therefore think of the women as prostitutes. They will often turn down women who approach them with direct sexual propositions, preferring less explicit overtures ('Where are you from?', 'Do you like Cuba?') to lead into the same scripts they would use in non-commercial encounters ('Can I get you a drink?', 'Would you like to have dinner with me?'). The whole process can then be interpreted as confirming a mutual attraction, and when the woman later confides her desperate need for dollars, the man can construct the act of giving her money not as payment for services rendered, but as a gesture of solidarity. This accords him the role of a 'good guy', both irresistibly charming and generous.

As well as granting sexual license, the woman often helps the tourist to find cheaper accommodation (sometimes putting him up in her own room), she acts his guide, companion and interpreter, she may even do his laundry and cook for him. In return, he is expected to pay for food, drinks and evening entertainment, he may give her soap, shampoo and clothing or leave her some cash when he moves on to the next place or the

next girl. The price paid by the sex tourist and the benefits secured by the jinitera are thus highly variable. An experienced and skilled woman with good 'black' market connections might manage to squeeze as much as \$50 and \$100 a day out of her tourist, though not all of this will be in cash. A more inexperienced woman or girl may secure next to nothing. One British sex tourist proudly boasted 'Some of them have slept with me for just a bar of soap'.

The sums of money involved are often negligible to a European or North American man. One British Mr Average explained that his 'girlfriend' (he had traded in another woman for her the previous day) had suggested that he move out of the hotel where he was paying \$20 per night, and stay in her flat where she would do all his washing and cook his meals for him. For all this, plus acting as guide and interpreter and granting him sexual access, she asked only \$5 a day plus the cost of the food. At home, this man could not even buy a pack of cigarettes for this sum, far less obtain the services of a maid/prostitute. Although he was nearly 40, fat with receding hair, while she was 20 and, in his words, 'like a model', he could tell himself that this sum of money was too small to have anything to do with the invitation she was extending to him. She must find him sexually attractive to be offering so much for so little in return.

The relationship between racism and sex tourism in Cuba is too complex to analyse properly in a report of this length, but two points need to be made about the significance of the dynamics of racism within Cuba itself for sex tourists. First, it is sadly the case that Black Cubans face many of the same 'racialised' barriers that oppress Black people elsewhere in the world. Groups that face this kind of structural disadvantage are often over-represented in prostitution. Our initial impression was that there were more Black than 'mixed' or white jiniteras not just in Santiago (where this can be explained by demographics), but also in Varedero and Havana. Second, a number of racist stereotypes still exist amongst Cubans, some of whom (white, 'mixed' and Black) will openly attribute 'characteristics' such as hypersexuality and rhythm to Black people, and in the same breath insist that there is no racism in Cuba.

All this is of enormous significance for sex tourists. To begin with, it means that large numbers of Black women are sexually available to them, which is perceived as a benefit by those men who find it difficult to satisfy their 'racialised'-sexual fantasies at home. Meanwhile, Cuba's own racism is frighteningly congruent with variants of European and North American racism, and visiting white racists therefore feel very much at ease in Cuba, often more so than they do in their own countries. As one Canadian said to me 'You can call a nigger a nigger here, and no-one takes it the wrong way'. Some white sex tourists adhere to a classic racist ideology, believing Black sexuality to be more uninhibited and exciting than white sexuality. In most European countries as well as in Canada, this form of racism has been strongly challenged by Black intellectuals and political activists, with some success in reducing the open expression of such attitudes.

Many racists therefore feel under attack in their own countries, where their opportunities for satisfying a sexual appetite for the Others they both despise and desire are also generally quite limited. For them, Cuba is 'paradise' in the sense that here, rather than being challenged, their racism is both implicitly and explicitly affirmed.

In Cuba, Right On Backpackers and Mr Averages can satisfy their sexual curiosity about Black and 'mixed' women and/or demonstrate their own 'racial liberalism' to themselves easily and without having to address any of the uncomfortable issues about racism which such a relationship would raise in their own country.

In Cuba today, exploitative sexual encounters are not only cheap financially, but in other terms. Because he is on holiday, the white sex tourist gets to enjoy sexual access to 'racialised' Others without risking the censure of his racist friends. Because he tells himself that Cuban girls are both hot and care free, he need feel no guilt about abandoning the woman and replacing her with a superior model.

Cuba presently has a great deal to offer the sex tourist. Such men can contemptuously command Cuban women and girls with the same ease that they order cocktails. Their power to do so rests not only upon the obscene disparity in wealth between the developed and underdeveloped world, but also upon American foreign policy. Under Batista, the US indirectly organised Cuba as its brothel and gambling house. Today, its punishment of Cuba is helping to recreate the conditions under which Cuban women and girls must become the playthings of economically advantaged, white, male Europeans and North Americans.

Julia O'Connell Davidson is a lecturer in sociology at a British university. Her articles on sex tourism in Thailand have appeared in the WRI Women's Newsletter.

ATTACK ON PEACE ACTIVIST IN SERBIA

In May, four lesbians from Serbia's only lesbian and gay organization, Arkadija, were beaten up in Belgrade. Lepa Mladjenovic is a member of the group and was one of the women attacked. Lepa is a well-known feminist peace activist and has received international recognition for her work on behalf of lesbian and gay human rights. She took part in the million-strong international gay and lesbian pride march in New York in June 1994, carrying the sign "Serbia--Stop the War".

Lepa said of the attackers, "It was the first time I looked at a man's eyes who was ready to kill me for what I am. The three men were very professional in the way they attacked us. It was clear they were trained to kill, and belonged to some fascist gang.

"He knew who I was. He called a dirty lesbian and held me up against the wall for some time, then he said he could hit me in some hallway of the house and kill me. Then he said, 'Go to the mosque, that's where you belong'. (The only Islamic mosque in Belgrade is just around the corner from where he held me.) With an extremely professional move of his hand he grabbed my glasses, broke them in half and threw them on the street, then he did the same to the glasses of Jelena. Jelena cursed him back and he hit her, then threw her on the pavement. The two other killers were mainly there backing him, very professionally too.

"It was clear they had self-appointed themselves to cleanse Dorcol (an old part of Belgrade where the attack occurred). It was clear that our mere presence on 'his land' was producing hatred. He thought he was offending me by telling me to go to mosque, a place where I have already been many times to visit some Bosnian women refugees who found there a shelter. The emotions with which he addressed us was so strong, as if we have killed some of his family. It was clear that lesbians, gays, Muslims, and who knows who else, probably Albanians, Gypsies..... are all on the same list to him. I wondered about the Muslim people who gather around the area to go to mosque, what is their experience with these killers? He threatened to kill me if I appeared again. I am thinking how many people he already killed in the war in Bosnia or Croatia? How many women has he raped? How many ethnic cleansing atrocities they were part of? What is going to be the next step in the war against me, against lesbians and gays in this town?"

Maja was another member of the group. She explained, "Four of us were at a meeting of Arkadija, working with a Canadian lesbian documentary crew, who were making a documentary on lesbians in Eastern Europe. It was the night of May 5, 1995. We had planned before to do the graffiti, when the Canadians said they wanted to film it. So we went outside and just started writing on wall across the street. We were writing three or

four slogans and on the wall, and didn't notice that we were near a café in the Dorcol (the oldest part of Belgrade) where young neighborhood criminals gather.

“One man came out of the café. He came up to Jelena, took her spray can and started calling Lepa dirty words, like ‘You dirty lesbian, I recognize you’. He was not upset because we were making graffiti. It was what we were writing that was the problem for him, slogans like ‘This is a lesbian universe’, ‘This is lesbian graffiti’, ‘I love women’. We had no idea he was going to get two more guys. We went to the end of the street, and then Lepa left for home. The four Canadians left, and Jelena and I decided to write a few more slogans.

A few minutes later Lepa came running towards us. She told us to leave because some men were coming. She was so frightened. Three guys came up, including the man from the café. One guy had a hockey stick, another a paint can. They started calling us dirty lesbians, saying we were dirtying the Dorcol. One took Lepa's glasses off her face and broke them with one hand. He kicked Jelena, who fell on the pavement, and broke her glasses. He kept on kicking her. I felt really bad that I couldn't do anything.

“This was a Friday night and there were at least ten other people in the street. It was at a main street intersection. Nobody, nobody reacted. This is the way Belgrade is now. You can shoot somebody now and nobody will notice. We started walking away from the men. One of them shouted, ‘If you ever come back we will kill you!’ One of them told Jelena that she should go back to school, that she was being seduced by a lesbian gang leader. They ran after us and spray painted our clothes and hair.

“I was so frightened I couldn't think. Jelena had bruises on her legs. I felt so bad for her, her family had kicked her out when they found out she was a lesbian. Now finally she can come out openly, and she gets attacked.

“The next day I went back to see what we did. Something drew me back to the place. I put makeup on, let my hair down. I was in disguise, trying to be as feminine as possible. Thank god, nobody saw me there. After that, every time we went to an Arkadia meeting we were afraid somebody would come and beat us, throw bombs. It was obvious where we had begun spray painting.

“But still it was worth it. It's increasing the visibility of the lesbians. I feel that what we did will open the eyes of a lot of people. It will make us visible, which is why we put ourselves in danger. There are so many lesbians who are lonely, who are thinking they are the only one in the world, and that's why we did it. Because people think our existence is illegal, that we pollute the city.”

Arkadija-Labrys, Brace Baruh 11, 11000 Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

OUT of Africa

African women's groups are increasing throughout the continent. In Zaire, the women's group Femmes Somba Mo Manya began a public awareness campaign earlier this year about female genital mutilation. The group has organized educational events in rural areas, in order to support women who refuse to undergo the mutilation. Such women are usually ostracized by their communities.

In the Cape area in South Africa, a black women's group called The Women's College is interviewing women about their everyday lives for an oral history project. The 40-member group is trying to reach as broad a spectrum of women as possible, in order to preserve the history of women in the freedom struggle. Women's groups throughout South Africa are meeting November 24-25 for a National Convention on Violence Against Women in Cape Town. Contact: NICRO Women's Support Centre, 4 Bultensingel, Cape Town 8001, S. Africa.

In Mauritius, the women's group Muvman Liberasyon Fam (MLF--Women's Freedom Movement) has been tackling traditional Muslim and Hindu laws and attitudes that discriminate against women for almost 20 years. The group has organized actions against polygamy, marriage of underage girls, and anti-abortion legislation. In April 1994 MLF organized a large public demonstration demanding government rent subsidies for women with low incomes. MLF also organizes self defense classes, study groups and forums about violence against women. MLF includes rural women, artists, teachers and factory workers. They are now fundraising in order to build a documentation and action center. "You in the West often know better the situation in Africa than we do," Rajni Lallah, a founder of MLF, said during a recent visit to the Netherlands. The documentation would help MLF gather and distribute information about the situation in Africa throughout Mauritius and Africa.

Lallah said that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is holding Mauritius up as a model of economic development. This is despite the low wages, long hours and poor working conditions that women especially labor under. The IMF 'endorsement' means that major development agencies are refusing to support women's projects in Mauritius. Mama Cash, a small women's funding agency in the Netherlands, is trying to help MLF raise the approximately US \$30,000 need to build the center. Donations can be sent to Mama Cash, Postbus 15.686, NL-1001 ND Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Fax +31 20 6834647. European giro postbank number 6037738, bankrek. MeesPierson 21.30.00.555.

Association Pour Le Progrès et la Défense des Droits des Femmes Maliennes (APDF) est une association nationale qui regroupe les femmes de toutes les couches soci-

professionnelles et économiques de notre pays. Créée après les événements historiques survenus au Mali en mars 1991, elle se veut démocratique, indépendante et apolitique. A ce titre, l'APDF se démarque de tout parti politique en vue d'être l'émanation des aspirations de ses membres qui sont autant en zones rurales qu'urbaines; travailleuses salariées ou indépendantes, elles se retrouvent dans tous les secteurs économiques du pays: agriculture, élevage, pêche, commerce, tâches domestiques. Par rapport à cette couche très variée de militantes, l'APDF s'est fixée des buts et des objectifs par rapport aux conditions sociales, économiques, politiques et culturelles des femmes dans la nouvelle ère de démocratie au Mali. APDF, Boite postale 1740, Bamako, République Mali, Afrique de l'Ouest.

RUSSIAN WOMEN OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

by Renfrey Clarke

The victim in roughly half of all Russian murders is a woman. The typical setting is the home, and the killer is usually the woman's husband or partner. Figures released by government agencies during June put the number of women who died in Russia last year as a result of domestic violence at some 15,000. In this war within Russia's apartment blocks, waged against half the country's population, the death toll each year is many times the number of Russian soldiers that have been killed in Chechnya.

The Russian State Committee on Statistics reported an 11.5% increase in recorded crimes against women during 1993. Apart from the murders, 56,400 cases of serious injury were registered. But the real number is far higher than this; the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda early this year estimated that only 7% of domestic violence victims file complaints with the police.

The number of cases of rape in recent years can only be guessed at. Official figures cite an increase in reported rapes from 10,900 in 1987 to more than 14,000 in 1994. But Tatyana Zabelina, a sociologist at the Institute of Youth, thinks this may represent as few as one in 50 of the rapes that actually occur.

“In our laws under the Soviets, there was not even one word about domestic violence. This problem of all forms of violence against women has always existed in our country and during the last few years it’s become more brutal,” Zabelina said in a recent interview with the English-language Moscow Tribune. Cases of wife beating or child abuse were recorded as “hooliganism”, or dismissed as the actions of maniacs.

Sociologists link the increase to growing unemployment and alcohol abuse. Another factor is homelessness; the women and children most at risk of sexual attacks include the growing number living in basements and railway stations.

Zabelina said the wives of the wealthy ‘new Russians’ are another much-abused group. “Their husbands can be very brutal,” she said. “In their youth they were very poor ... Their wives remember that they were hungry students or shop assistants, and they are ashamed. They want everybody to respect them, but their wives cannot respect them in the way they want. They return drunk from lunches and parties and take out their frustrations on their wives.”

Moscow’s Crisis Centre for Women was established in 1993, and there are almost a dozen such centres in other Russian cities. In March 1994 a Sexual Assault Recovery Centre was established in Moscow, with Zabelina as its director. This centre runs a telephone hot-line known as ‘Sisters’, which in its first year received more than 2000 calls. During June, activists in Moscow published a 100-page handbook entitled ‘How to Start and Manage a Women’s Crisis Centre’.

Moscow’s first women’s shelter was established early this year, after the city government responded to a three-year campaign by providing welfare activists with a near-derelect building. Western-style legislation on domestic violence is also being drawn up for submission to the Russian parliament.



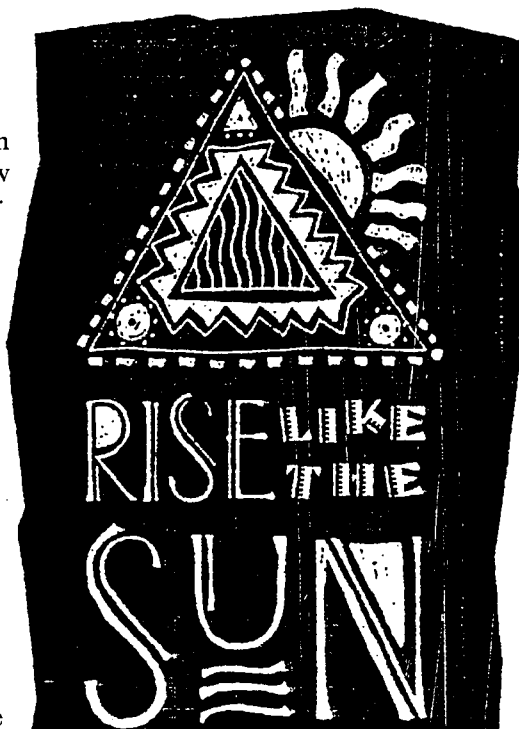
WRI WOMEN ON THE MOVE

GUNFREE SOUTH AFRICA

Adèle Kirsten, whom some readers will remember meeting at the WRI women's gatherings in Ireland and Thailand, has been appointed the National Co-ordinator of Gunfree South Africa. Gunfree South Africa is committed to reducing violence throughout the country by reducing the number of weapons, especially light firearms, now available. Adèle would appreciate information on the following subjects: gun control legislation in your country; material on whether the issue of 'the right to bear arms' is included, or about to be included, in your Constitution or Bill of Rights; organizations who are working on the control and reduction in the proliferation of light firearms. Contact: Gunfree South Africa, 195 Smit Street, Braamfontein 2001, South Africa. Tel. +27 (011) 403 4590; fax +27 (011) 403 4596.

NEW NGO FOR WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

R.K. Ruma, who was a participant at the WRI women's gathering in Thailand, has founded a new nongovernmental organization for rural women in Bangladesh. The organization, founded January 1995, is called BIKASH (Blossoming). BIKASH exists to empower marginalized women, and has already formed self-help groups for hundreds of Bangladeshi women. The groups provide village women a chance to discuss and share their experiences, and to organize income-generating projects so that they can improve their families standard of living. BIKASH also has a small library with books on women's development, health, and community organizing. Books on any of these



issues, plus materials on organizing against violence against women, are welcomed. Contact: R.K. Ruma, Executive Director, BIKASH, P.O. Box No. 46, Faridpur-7800, Bangladesh.

NGO FORUM IN BEIJING

Several women from the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), who are also members of the WRI Women's Working Group, have been attending the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. Hansa Mazgaonkar (India), Beena Sebastian (India) and Shelley Anderson (USA/Netherlands) participated in Peace Tent activities at the NGO Forum, and lobbied for reparations for 'comfort' women (women prostituted by the Japanese military during the Second World War) and for an end to violence against Tibetan women. The IFOR delegation also included women from Japan, Bangladesh, Italy, Zambia and the USA. Contact: IFOR, Spoorstraat 38, NL-1815 BK Alkmaar, the Netherlands. Tel. +31 72 5123 014; fax +31 72 5151 102; email: ifor@gn.apc.org



FIGHTING SEX TOURISM

Last December a 14-member Japanese police team visited Thailand on a study tour on how to fight prostitution. Police officer Hiroyuki Kita said that there are 50,000 Thai prostitutes in Japan, about 10 percent of whom are under 18 years of age. Japanese organized crime (the yakuza) are behind the traffick in women. Kita said the number of prostitutes in Japan is falling in the wake of a concerted government campaign.

In January the Thai government announced that it would send a protest note to Japan about the publishing, in September 1994, of a guide book for sex tourists called *Textbook of prostitution in Thailand*. The book includes telephone numbers, price lists and Thai phrases to help clients buy sex in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The first printing of 15,000 copies sold out quickly. The publisher printed a second edition under the title *Thailand Night Zone Guidebook*.

Thai women's groups organized an international letter writing campaign to the publisher, stating 'This book is an obvious violation of our human rights as Thai women. We struggle to create a different image of Thailand, one which focuses on the beauty of Thai culture. Publications like this disregard our effort and disrespect our sisters'. Write to Data House Publishing, 4-32-11-615 Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 160 Japan, and demand that they destroy all unreleased copies of the book.

SEX TOURISM ONLINE

Sex tourists have also carved out a space on the Internet. You can now read the 'Good Whores Guide to San Francisco', plus information about the best buys in Thailand, Colombia, Costa Rico, and Mexico. An online sex tourism guide to Amsterdam highlights the Russian and East European 'lovelies' now available. The following appears from a conference called alt.sex.services: "On one of my visits to a major Bangkok massage parlour, I was comfortably sitting in the lobby and discussing with the attendant the attributes of the many girls behind the glass wall...Picking out the best from over 80 gals arrayed for your inspection is difficult....my helper suggested one of the special bar areas, where they had 'some young ones' Inside the other room off to the lobby sat about 12 little girls watching TV. On a command from my attendant, they all sat back up on the couches and smiled at me, with the youngest at my guess about 12....I couldn't restrain myself! I had to have one of them....she turned out to be 16 years old....I don't think her entire slit, from bottom to clit, could have been over 2 1/2 to 3 inches!" Send a message about what you think about the sexual exploitation of children to alt.sex.services. On the World Wide Web, the address is <http://www.paranoia.com/faq/prostitution/>

NEWS

WOMEN IN ARGENTINA'S MILITARY

Women, formerly banned from Argentina's military, are now being accepted as volunteers. The move came last year after mandatory conscription for men was abolished. Conscription ended because of public outrage over the death of a conscript after being beaten by his superiors. Over 5,000 women have applied to join the military, only ten percent of whom have been accepted into the Army, for communications, administrative and medical work. Three hundred women are now serving their first one-year term. Competition for the few jobs open to women is fierce. There are 82 openings for women in electronic operations for the 601 Communications Group Battalion (located in City Bell, 60 kilometers outside Buenos Aires). This is the only battalion so far opened to women. The Navy and Air Force are refusing to accept women volunteers, claiming there are not enough bathrooms for women.

Women must be between 18 and 24 years of age, single, in good health and with no criminal record. Most women are volunteering because military service is seen as an adventurous job opportunity. "I've been out of work since I finished secondary school and I saw military service as a way of earning an income, at least for a year," said one 19-year old woman, who was rejected for service.

LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN IN AUSTRIA

Lateinamerikanische Exilierte und Emigrierte Frauen in Österreich (LEFO) is an organization of and for Latin American women in Austria. LEFO helps with legal, employment and immigration/asylum questions, provides courses in integration into Austrian society, and fights against discrimination and the traffick in women. Counseling is available and social gatherings, to help women keep in touch with events in Latin America, are regularly organized. LEFO also organizes workshops and operates a library (in Spanish and German). Contact: LEFO, 1050 Vienna, Kettenbrückengasse 15/4, Austria. Tel. 58 11 881 fax 58 11 882. You can also subscribe to the LEFO newsletter "Lefita", or make donations through kontonummer von LEFO: Bank Austria No. 68 40 63 605.

IN MEMORIA

Bernie Constance Crossland (born January 24, 1907) died on March 21, 1995. She was the last suffragette in Britain. She was seven when she marched in a demonstration for women's right to vote earlier this century. Bernie's mother was Eleanor Higginson, a militant who had chained herself to railings outside Parliament and been on hunger strike in

Holloway Prison. Bernie lived long enough to participate in the 1987 opening of the Pankhurst Center in Manchester, a feminist center and archive for suffragette memorabilia. Rest in peace, sister.

202 544 1034; fax +1 202 544 1401; email at RAINNmail@aol.com RAINN accepts Mastercard, Visa and American Express. Donations are tax deductible in the US, as RAINN is a 501(c)(3) organization (tax ID number is 52-1886511).

RAPE HOTLINE NEEDS HELP

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) operates the only national hotline for victims of sexual assault in the US. The hotline was founded in July 1994. When victims call the toll-free hotline (800-656-HOPE) they are automatically connected to a trained counselor from the rape crisis center closest to them; presently 599 rape crisis centers nationwide participate with RAINN. The hotline provides callers access to counseling 24 hours a day, from 48 states and the District of Columbia. RAINN has already helped more than 15,000 victims of sexual violence.

In order to keep the hotline running, US \$120,000 is needed. Many calls to RAINN are from children being molested by someone in their household; before RAINN, they were afraid to get help because a call would show up on their phone bill. Donations to RAINN can be sent to: RAINN, 252 Tenth Street NE, Washington, DC 20002, USA. Tel. +1

QUEERS FOR CUBA

The annual May Day parade in Havana, Cuba made history this year. Two visiting US gay and lesbian delegations--one from New York's Center for Cuban Studies and the other from Bay Area (San Francisco) Queers for Cuba--marched with an equal number of Cuban gays and lesbians from the emerging group GALEES (Action Group for the Liberation of Sexual Choice and Expression), carrying a piece of the rainbow flag from the June 1994 Stonewall 25 celebration. It was the first time Cuban gays and lesbians marched openly for their own rights. The Queers for Cuba delegation brought medical supplies, medication and safe sex supplies to donate to the residents of Los Cocos, a sanitarium for people with AIDS. The US group organized a protest of the US embargo against Cuba at their local Gay Pride Day events, and is organizing a third delegation in December 1995. Queers for Cuba, tel. +1 415 995 4678.

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