

thing, it seems to me, which should be done for women is to help them get back to the environment appropriate to their biology, where they can be fulfilled. And I would dare to suggest that the family is where women are most likely to find real happiness.

If women abandon the family, ruin must follow. But has the traditional family outlived itself? And if so, what should replace it? We must develop an alternative, or if we agree that the family in its traditional form has not yet exhausted its potential, encourage women to return to it.

Obviously, I wouldn't go as far as to claim that all women engineers are unhappy by definition, or that all women who live only for their fam-

ilies are ecstatically happy. But then a Soviet woman, watching a Western film, will see her foreign sisters lying on the shore of the Adriatic Sea surrounded by well-tended children. And, of course, she begins to envy those women. It is a bitter reproach to all of us. Who has not heard a woman sincerely confess that her greatest desire is to have a good night's sleep, that a day's rest is the pinnacle of her dreams?

Really, it is time to admit that the woman's lot is not a happy one.

But maybe women have undergone irreversible changes. Could it be that having partly lost their biological essence, they have acquired skills organic to production work?

The woman happily

rushes to work in the hope of finding there what she has failed to find at home. This should not be condemned. Although I am convinced that work in production is neither biologically nor psychologically appropriate for women.

I do know women who are dismayed at the thought of retiring. I pity them. A woman who sincerely believes that her life will end when she parts from her two-thousand-strong work team is a sad prospect. Alas, most probably, few real family joys have fallen to the lot of such a woman.

Some readers may consider my attitude to women philistine, even derisive. But they would be wrong. I believe that the future of civilization is intricately bound up with the

woman's role in society. Destructive aggressiveness and the spirit of military rivalry to which men are often prone are alien to women.

For centuries men have been organizing the "best of all worlds" as they have seen fit and proper. And in doing this they have forgotten all about women. Yet they are worshipped, poets write verses to them, and most men love them. But who today understands and remembers that only women know the real price of life?

I think the time is not far off when the dream of feminists will come true: the dialogue with woman and about woman will be conducted in the language of intellect and truth.

Thinking of Women

by Nina SIMAKOVA,
Cand.Sc. (Philosophy) and an
associate of the Institute of
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It is a literary cliché that women are primarily emotional creatures, beings invested with little social significance.

There is also a view that the drawing of women into social production is the result of a whim, a caprice, on their part. Furthermore, it is claimed that women "at work" often strive for fame and for authority over the collective. In fact, this is by no means so.

Today, nobody is astonished when a little girl says she wants to be a cosmonaut or pilot, or wants to enter some other profession that formerly was closed to all but men. But none of this should surprise us. Just look at the image of the modern heroine presented by our mass media. In contrast, in India, for instance, any girl asked how

she sees her future, as a rule, will answer that she'll be a wife. And at fifteen she will be a wife. What's more, the divorce rate in India is almost nil.

During all ten years of my schooling I was a class monitor. It was my duty to help my teachers maintain discipline and, being chairman of the council of the school Young Pioneer unit and later secretary of the school Kom-somol committee, I also helped them organize the socio-political and cultural life of the pupils. I could not afford to be weak and mild. Otherwise I would never have coped with the role which my teachers and fellow-pupils thought me worthy of. In my school years the sense of participating in the life of a major group, in which the more energy and time you gave to social work

the more you were appreciated and praised, developed into an inner need. And I felt proud and happy when I solved a difficult maths problem faster than all the boys, or when I won a city and republican physics competition and gained admission to a children's physics and mathematics school.

I ended up going to an engineering college. Now, twenty years on, I am not at all surprised to learn that forty-four per cent of students at Soviet engineering colleges are girls.

Perhaps one of the key factors explaining why a girl should choose an engineering or technical profession is the absence of social guarantees of a stable and well-provided married life, and even of marriage itself. Economic self-reliance and independence become the basic motive in the choice of a career. At present, comparatively few Soviet families could get by without the wife's earnings. And often she will earn as much as her husband.

But the family needs its mother. And she must be

energetic and indefatigable, a person of many parts. In short, the strain on women can be simply enormous. Research shows that women are most likely to think of divorce when stretched to the physical and mental limit.

This finding suggests that the pressure on women at work should be reduced: by cutting working hours, without reducing pay. But to offer a woman more free time and to raise her living standards is not the whole answer to the problem. It is just as important that women should use the opportunities provided by such a policy to benefit their families.

An interesting solution to the problem of working women has been found, for instance, in Japan. Women there work only twice in their lifetime — before marriage and after their children have reached adulthood. The rest of the time is devoted to raising and educating the children and looking after her husband. Perhaps this is why Japan has the world's high-

est labour productivity?

So wouldn't it be simpler to relieve women of the burden of participating in social production, forever restoring them to their families?

It would no doubt be a solution, but only at first glance. Let us imagine that tomorrow all women economists, engineers and technicians gave up their jobs. Who would replace them? (They account for the majority of workers in these spheres, by the way.) And the exclusion of women from social production, sanctioned by the state, would virtually bring an end to emancipation. Now an absolute majority of working women would not wish to leave work.

It should be observed that at present, worldwide, there is a steady rise in the percentage of women working in the spheres of production and science. Hence, in the foreseeable future women will play an increasingly important socio-economic role. Benefits yield quick results. For in-

stance, in 1983, for the first time in many years, the number of new-born babies in our country reached 5.4 million, rising to 5.5 million in 1986. Economists attribute this fact to the granting to women of leave to look after their babies until they are eighteen months old. In the immediate future this period will be increased simultaneously with the extension of prenatal leave. Besides, there should be a more intensive orientation of girls to the women's behavioural stereotype — marriage, giving birth and raising children, and concern for the husband and home. A woman should be prepared for a marriage-and-family life. In the meantime, the social policy of the state should increasingly consider the fact that the woman is needed by the family and that this is why she needs material support and, still more, time free of production work. We should all consider how this might best be achieved.

SOMAFCO

P.O. Box 680
Mazimbu
Morogoro

27th October 89

Dear Comrade Thami,

Thank you for the letter and copy of my addition to the paper. Your letter is dated 20th September and arrived here yesterday. Perhaps you should consider sending letters by post rather than by hand, as more than a month to arrive seems to me unacceptable, even here at Mazimbu where we are accustomed to postal delays.

The paper is obviously incomplete, and this was partly due to the pressure of time, although as I remember I did make some suggestions of what I considered would be necessary to add.

These are mainly concerned with the organisation and role of women in South Africa today. I am unable to make further comments, as of course I am not able to see what further papers have been prepared for the conference. But in view of the fact that it has been postponed until next year, it should be possible to prepare something if it has not already been done.

With comradely greetings

Amandla!

Hilda Bernstein



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20th September, 1989

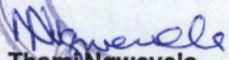
Dear Comrade Hilda,

We take this opportunity to commend you for the effort put into the reviewing the paper on Women in Urban and Rural Areas prepared by Cde Ray Simons as a background paper for the upcoming Malibongwe Conference, and the comments you sent thereafter.

We received the paper and sincerely wish to apologise for the delay in returning this edited copy. Thank you. The contribution you made and the way in which you responded to the task even after the complications we had of communication, is very encouraging and we hope you shall not only keep up this spirit, but pass it on to other comrades.

We now attach for you a copy of the paper as originally printed out by us, however, we wish to point out that this is still being reviewed as a proposed insert to the paper in question and thus is not in its final format.

MALIBONGWE


Thami Ngwevela

CONVENOR - MALIBONGWE PREP COMMITTEE

PROPOSED INSERT TO PAPER ON WOMEN IN RURAL/URBAN AREAS

WRITTEN BY HILDA BERSTEIN

Mzimba, Tanzania

MAY 1989

Three linked systems have created and defined the position of women in South Africa today: colonialism, capitalism and apartheid. These systems have impacted on the lives of both men and women, which is why women have always participated fully in organisations struggling for national liberation together with men. But the impact of these systems has not been the same for both sexes; and for this reason, women have, in addition to their general political activities, also organised themselves in women's organisations that reflect their own specific needs.

In addition, during the past two decades the increasingly harsh oppressive measures of the apartheid regime have been brought to bear most strongly on women, on children, and on old people, as, for instance, in the regime's pursuit of a policy of forced population removals and the increased application of removals to the Bantustans as a way of disposing of women, children and old people who are not required to work for the regime.

The results of these policies has been to develop greater solidarity among women, uniting women of different social and class backgrounds, bridging racial divisions, and leading to stronger links between the women of the rural and urban areas.

Basically, South African women remain victims of what we describe as their triple oppression: oppression by race, sex and class.

The first imposition, on both women and men, was the idea of the "inferiority" maintained by the colonialists along with the destruction of pre-colonial social structures. The second imposition from both the traditions of the old society and the doctrines of the new - that is, the inferior status imposed on women by the relationships between women and men. The third is that from the beginning of industrialisation, sexual discrimination was embedded in the overall system of exploitation, and remains to this day. This is the triple burden carried by black women, the majority of women in South Africa.

Apartheid is a unique system, without an equivalent anywhere else in the world, but despite this the struggle of women in South Africa has great significance for women of other countries. Superficially there is a contradiction: the extent of the oppression of women - legally, socially, in every other way - can scarcely be over-emphasised. Yet, bound by the most harsh and extreme conditions, these most oppressed reveal the capacity for defiance, a great power of endurance, talents to unite and organise themselves, abilities to survive and protect their families and to fight apartheid oppression with ever-increasing strength and consistency.

During the past few years new directions in their struggle and different forms of organisation have been forced on them by the reaction of the apartheid regime to the continuing uprising and resistance to apartheid, specifically in the urban areas.

The State of Emergency [SOE] imposed in July 1985 was an effort to control this resistance; lifted the following year, it was re-imposed within three months, and again in each subsequent year, so that the State of Emergency - a "temporary" measure - has become the permanent situation. This SOE has attempted to stifle all opposition to apartheid. Since 1950, 58 organisations have been banned or restricted, with an additional 42 in the so-called "homelands" or Bantustans [a total of 100]. Most of these organisations have been banned in the past few years. They include political organisations, cultural associations, organisations of women, youth, students, sporting bodies, trade unions or bodies of journalists, teachers, parents, bodies set up to provide funds or assistance to political detainees and prisoners, church and human rights organisations. The list is endless.

In addition, under South Africa's emergency and security laws, 73 000 people have been detained in recent years [this figure, given by the Human Rights Commission is based on official statistics, and is certainly an underestimate, according to the Commission] More than 50 000 of this under-estimated total were detained in the past 5 years. In the first State of Emergency [July 85 to March 86] 46% of all detained were juveniles, under 20 years, and of those 25% were children aged 15 and under. According to the Human Rights Commission, women represent between 10 and 15% of all detained, a total of between 7 000 and 10 000 women. This proportion of women detainees reflects the smaller proportion of women to men involved in many organisations, but does not reflect the extent to which women are participating in the struggle against apartheid.

Of all those tens of thousands kept, often in solitary confinement, tortured, physically and mentally abused, some of whom were held for more than two years at a time, others of whom were released, re-arrested, released and re-arrested for months at a time; of all those who have suffered the horrors of detention laws that gives total license to secret police torturers, only between 2 and 4% have ever been convicted of any offence, even under the wide-sweeping and stringent security laws. And of those charged, between 80 and 92% either have charges withdrawn or are acquitted.

The detention of large numbers of women under these unjust security laws, and the disappearance of children as young as seven, eight, nine and ten into jails, has more than anything affected the family life of the black majority and driven women to new activities and new responsibilities. [Of the 30 000 detained between 1986 -88, an estimated one third (10 000) were children]

I commissioned a report on what this parliament has done to change the position of women in 16 months. To be published every year. Not just parliamentarians, but what effect it has had on women generally &

Women Presiding Officers - ie, Speakers - & there are 18 of us out of 190 parliaments. We get together, try & meet every yr. will be coming to Sweden in September will be devoted totally to how do we make parliament function better for women.

He: Bldg is exclamation of mighty power - if you'd seen the old pictures - it was worse. General atmosphere of macho - are women intimidated by it?

I think men & women were intimidated. Many kinds of ways women have made it better. Today we got the quota (of women) from the ANC we went & said we had to have a creche. Marvellous conversation. ANC is going to be majority. How many children? We don't know. And what ages? We don't know. But we want it, & it happened on the 9th. They had a room, some toys & someone to look after the children. It's for the staff as well as the MPs. I

Those of us who lived in exile are familiar with parliaments, but those who didn't... unfamiliar with institutions. The very technical law-making process is intimidating & very difficult - & I'm a lawyer, how much more difficult for the others. These are the sorts of problems. (I'm trying to do something about it)

Women have been worse affected by the dislocation of their lives. Take the exile women. They came back, most of them set up homes in Johannesburg & kids in schools. Marriages disappeared. Men have some problems in accommodating women in power positions - women positions of authority. Women generally have shown more confidence, black women, more assertiveness.

Take Baleka, single parent of 5 children, left older ones in Johannesburg, took the younger ones in school here. She's also chair of the ANC caucus in Parliament. Her constituency is in Natal. She's also one of the kingpins of the negotiations. So women are very powerful in decision-making positions.

Women's support groups necessary.

Good policies at top, in exile policy making was easier. We had OR. I thought let's get the policies in place, & have the public education later. Policies set a standard they act as a kind of norm & give women a weapon. A lot of men are intimidated, how can they say they are against ANC policy? It was a conscious decision not worrying too much about political education. When we came back we realised with shock just how bad internally things were - in UDF & ANC. We still went for the policies, & used that. In exile able to get policies across because we managed to flag women into the democratic rhetoric - blacks must not be excluded, so why must women be excluded. Remember the argument when said that time will come when we will negotiate with the Afrikaners & they will say 'It is our culture that we live in this way? Are you going to accept this? Then why are you accepting it from our own people? We tended to use this kind of argument which didn't convince anyone, but which they couldn't refute. & we knew what we were doing. It began to make them think, they couldn't counter them. We said culture & religion must be subject to equality.

& then when we came back we then plugged into the national rhetoric in the same way. There were practically no women in the negotiating team. We mobilised women outside, they demonstrated, & we got women. Then the ANC men came across real chauvinism. After CODESA failed (explanation of how she got ANC to allow her to speak.)

At the end she said she said she had special message for the men here: women are not only the majority, they are the majority of the voters. How do you have a democracy if you exclude the women?

We began women's networks. It made an impact on other parties. Other parties opposed the quota but they had to include women, they were saying what about us? In the end because women's network we ended up with women negotiators. They saw Baleka & Maviva & others functioning as negotiators. They saw the sudden difference.

(By all t noise ANC made, others were affected.)

Tody wll take a very brave man to challenge t principles the sensitivy in terms of language. Kobie Coetzee at a press conference said somethng abou draughtsman - then he lookd & said 'draughtperson.' And everyone includng t press roared wth laughter. Bt it was a sign of the sensistivty & awarenes. T leadership hs agreed very important policies.

ANC people nt familiar wth

Wmn dõing brilliantly on cttees, they are chairng many of thm. All o this begins to hve an impact on t men. bcos basically competent wmn are invisible. T wmn hce just done outstandingly well. Trad & Industry, Finance, Science & Technology, AgricultureHealth,

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