

FAIR PLAY

Gender & Development Magazine
of KARAT Coalition, 3/2001

Albania

Bulgaria

Croatia

Czech Republic

Hungary

Latvia

Macedonia

Moldova

Poland

Romania

Russia

Slovakia

Ukraine

Yugoslavia

PENETRATING THE GLASS CEILINGS OF THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

Women and Governance

You've got to be in it to win it

MY

first memorable brush with sexism was when I was 10 or 11 and went to gymnastics. I was fighting with one of the boys while we were waiting for our turn on a piece of apparatus, and it probably wasn't for the first time because our punishment, when it came, was significant.

"Right," barked the coach. "You do 150 push-ups," he said to the boy. "You do 80," he said to me. I should have considered myself lucky that as a girl, I could expect a lighter penance for naughtiness but instead I was violently indignant that the coach thought the boy could do more push-ups than me, just because he was a boy. We were little scraps of things, push-ups were not very strenuous back then. There was hardly any weight to push up. So I did 150 press-ups as well.

It's not quite on the same scale as being indignant about the absence of women in powerful decision-making roles but the sentiment is similar: females are equally as capable. This issue of Fairplay focuses on what women are and aren't doing to get themselves into politics and, ultimately, into government.

What comes across poignantly from virtually all of our international contributors on the theme is that in the fledgling democracies of Central and Eastern Europe women are actually facing a heightened struggle. The 'Socialist fossil' of the gender quota systems is gone, and without it, it seems, patriarchal patterns of social order are free to flourish in party politics.

State funding for social services has dropped radically; women are bearing the burden of added responsibilities and having less time than ever for political activity.

You'll hear how in the Czech Republic not a single woman made it into the ultimate echelons of influence - the government cabinet - when the Czech Social Democratic party won the elections. And how the feisty women politicians rallied back.

You'll get a clear picture of the map of women in politics across the region and you'll see how it compares with trends in the Western European countries trying the hardest to address the situation, trying hardest to put capable women into positions in which they can make their fair contribution to society.

You'll get an overview of the factors that hold women back in politics, whether it be socialisation persuading us that women have set roles in society and that politics is a game for the boys, or whether it be intimidation, the lack of encouragement and preparation and training for women who contemplate speaking up.

And you'll get an exclusive in-depth interview with one of Bulgaria's most durable and experienced women MPs.

There's news on the state of affairs in many Karat quarters, research, realities, initiatives and hopes. Also to look out for are the conclusion of What's There to Like (page 7) from the last issue, a very thorough study of the way Russia's labor laws fail to act for women employers in the private sector, an engaging piece on evictions in Poland (Turned out on to the Streets, page 14) and the highlights of noteworthy events in the region.

Happy reading!

Letters to the Editor?

You are welcome to give your opinion on anything discussed in Fair Play - or to spark a new discussion. Include your name, address and e-mail address. Letters should be as brief as possible. The editors reserve the right to edit submissions.

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HOT SPOT

All-female shadow cabinet formed in Czech Republic



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by Michaela Marksova-Tominova

There is an old Czech legend which tells of the princess Libuse who, as the eldest of three sisters, was destined to rule when their father died. The courtiers were horrified and one coined the saying: "Woe be to men ruled over by a woman!"

To temper indignation among her servers, she married. But the saying has apparently remained deep in the consciousness of the nation's men: there have been no women in the Czech government since the last election in June 1998. The last parliamentary elections were won by the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) - the only political party in the country which has an internal women's organization and applies a quota of 25 per cent women for all party bodies.

Apparently it didn't apply in the case of the cabinet.

At the beginning of the year, the Prime Minister Milos

Zeman announced he was preparing for a reshuffle of about five cabinet ministers. Yet there wasn't a single woman among the new faces. When a journalist asked him why he replied:

„When I compared male and female candidates, the men seemed the better experts in every case.”

Women in Politics: 2000 Situation in March 2000 as per official data United Nations (map N4136 the world today)

Albania -15%	Moldova -5.3%
Bulgaria -11%	Poland -18.7%
Croatia -16.2%	Romania -25.5%
Belarus -23.7%	Slovakia -19%
Hungary -35.9%	Ukraine -37.5%
Latvia -6.7%	Yugoslavia -16.7%
Macedonia -10.9%	

This time a female Social Democratic MP lost patience. Jana Volfova, chairwoman of the Social Democratic Women, announced she was going to appoint a woman's shadow cabinet - to demonstrate to the prime minister and the public that there were women in the Czech Republic perfectly

capable of being cabinet ministers.

This proclamation stirred a big response - both positive, mostly from the international media, and

WOMEN IN ROMANIAN POLITICS: A DECADE AFTER THE FALL OF THE DICTATORSHIP

negative. Naturally the Czech media showed a very keen interest but at the same time some journalists and politicians tried to portray it as something rather odd.

The worst example was the case of one female MP - ironically from the same party - who accused Volfova of conceiving the women's shadow cabinet solely to try to compensate for problems in her personal life.

Volfova was also under pressure from her party not to use the whole thing against the prime minister. So the final compromise was to appoint the shadow cabinet half-seriously, in a slightly comical way.

From the outset it was decided there would be no Minister of Defence - because women would not be having any wars. But two new posts were created: Minister for Woman and Family, which Jana Volfova herself took up, and Minister for Human Rights.

Members were made up of Social Democrat MPs, independents and one member of the Christian Democratic Party. And - the shadow cabinet had no prime minister because of course there was the real one, Milos Zeman!

When the cabinet was introduced at a press conference, a well-known Czech actress was chosen as the speaker of the government. And to demonstrate that the whole action was not intended to harm the prime minister, he was invited along as well. The women's shadow cabinet posed for the photographs - with Milos Zeman in the centre. Some were critical of this, some were not - but the most important thing was that it sparked a discussion and it showed the public that the women of the Czech Republic were doing something.

What of the future? The cabinet is going to write a proclamation that each shadow minister should start co-operating with her government cabinet counterpart - and most likely become a member of his advisory body. Some already have! So keep your fingers crossed and perhaps at the next elections some of those women will step out from the shade.



Dr Liliana Popescu is a lecturer at the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest. She also leads a non-governmental organization involved in higher education reform - the Civic Education Project. Among her achievements with the project was the joint organization of a public protest against domestic violence in April. She edited the book *Gender and Power: Romanian Women in Public Life* (1999) and has written about the political situation in Romania and the position of women in its society for a number of Romanian and international journals. Her most recent was *The Gender Dimension of Democratization in Central East Europe*. Dr. Popescu is also vice-president of the Romanian Society of Political Science, which she helped to set up.

■ by Liliana Popescu

Romania lags well behind when it comes to the political representation of women, despite the fact that over 70 per cent of people involved in non-governmental activities are women. (Although less than a quarter of leaders of NGOs are female). This indicates that they are concerned with community problems and eager to contribute towards their resolution... but that they are under-represented politically.

Romania has a low, if not the lowest level of women's political representation in Europe: 5.5 per cent in the European Parliament.

The representation of Romanian women in domestic politics is even lower at local levels than at parliamentary level (three per cent of mayors and about six per cent of local and county councilors are women). This is a remarkable exception for Europe, where women generally feature more prominently in local politics than at a national level.

There is one woman minister in a cabinet of 18.

According to a survey by the National Democratic Institute prior to the November elections, the majority of MPs felt their party needed women's votes to win and declared it worthwhile to have a strategy to help clinch those undecided electors.

Most, however, were unaware of any such party strategy or simply indicated that there wasn't one (56 per cent of respondents).

It seems logical to conclude that parties either lack professionalism in their electoral campaign strategies or that politicians believe women are unaware of the power of their vote, or both. The sad thing is that if it is the latter, the politicians would not be wrong. Women lack a consciousness of the value and power of their vote when it comes to protecting and promoting their rights.

Women aren't interested in politics!

The majority of MPs think lack of interest is the reason so few women stand in elections, according to the survey.

A survey of women by the National Democratic Institute evoked the following responses, in order of significance: lack of party support, lack of confidence, lack of time (derived from family responsibilities), lack of money, lack of support from partners and families.

A different survey (Gallup survey, Open Society Institute, Bucharest, 2000) indicates that 65 per cent of men and just 49 per cent of women believe men have an interest in not having women promoted to positions of power because they would be competing against men for those positions.

WOMEN IN ROMANIAN POLITICS:

A DECADE AFTER THE FALL OF THE DICTATORSHIP

It is possibly true that there is minimal support for women candidates within parties. According to a number of interviews with female party members in Romania, a major barrier to higher representation is the lack of preoccupation within parties for selecting women on eligible candidate lists.

In order to have an impact on political decisions, women need to be present in leadership positions at a critical mass of

about 30 per cent, which is clearly far from being the case today. In 2000 there was for the first time a woman candidate running for president. Her visibility in the election run-up, however, was quasi-nonexistent.

In addition, drastic cuts in state fund allocations for social services mean women today are taking on more responsibilities within their families - which amounts to an increase in the unpaid work performed by them. It also means they have less free time for other concerns - including involvement in politics.

More than 60 per cent of respondents in the above-mentioned Gallup survey agreed that women have little time for leadership positions because they are too busy with domestic tasks.

However, this is to some extent determined by the absence of public policies to accompany the structural readjustment of the economy during the transitional to a market economy.

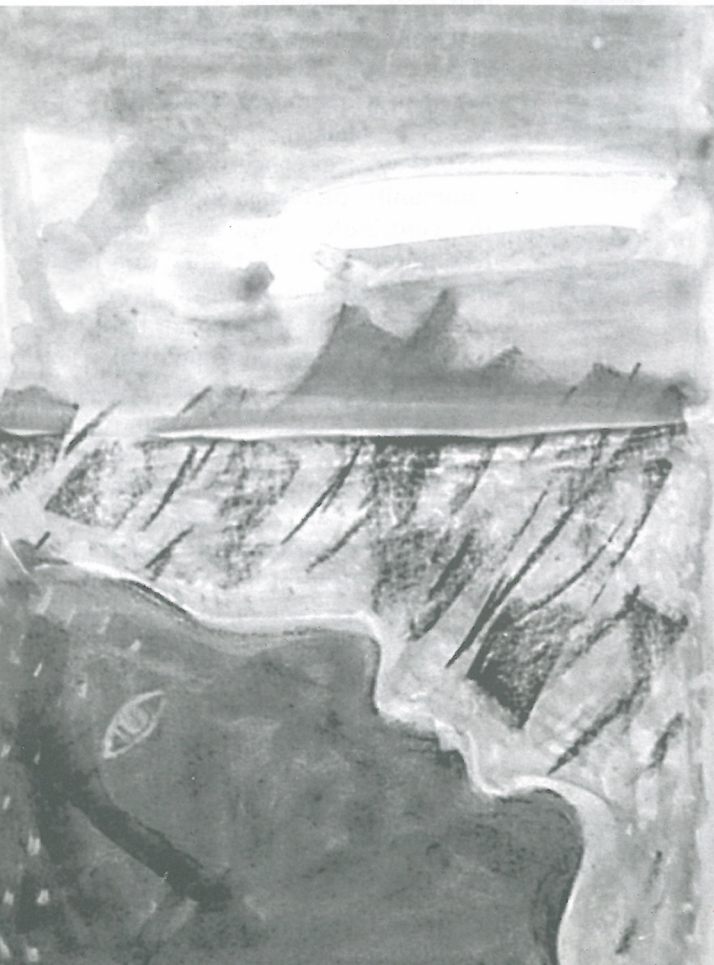
More women equals less corruption

It is also worthwhile noting the correspondence between high levels of corruption in a country and low levels of women's participation in politics. Countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Bangladesh are perceived as being among the most corrupt countries in the world. Coincidentally or otherwise, in those same countries women have the lowest representation in the parliament (between three and nine per cent), whereas in the least corrupt countries like Norway, Finland, Sweden and New Zealand, it is very high.

There is a need for higher involvement of human rights and women's NGOs on the issue of women's political representation.

More funds should be allocated to addressing women's issues and defending their rights and concerted efforts need to be made to overcome divisions among women MPs.

The prime interest of Romania's female MPs appears to be the assertion of party allegiance. Very few acknowledge their role as promoters of women's rights in a country where women's rights are not considered to be human rights. Women politicians are in a position to act for millions of women, if they are skilled enough and if they make the endeavour...



Ilana Pertzanska



MEN'S RULES

RULE IN THE POLITICS GAME

Monopolies are damaging for development in the long-term. That is why anti-monopoly regulations exist. In 'that' part of Europe which we so desperately strive to become a part of, there anti-monopoly regulations already operate in political elections.

They were introduced more through pure logic than as a result of campaigns by women's movements. That logic is: it is totally unreasonable for a demographic minority, which men are, to claim to be ruling on behalf of all citizens.

"In 1990 only four Western European countries had reached the level of 30 per cent representation by women in national decision-making structures: Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden," according to a report by the Secretariat of the UN Commission for Economic Development for Europe and North America, Geneva 2000. "Almost 10 years later they were joined by just three more countries: the Netherlands, Germany and Iceland. In the case of Germany, this impressive advance is a direct result of a policy of positive discrimination by a group of successful political parties who in 1988 approved a quota of 40 per cent for women in politics. The situation is improving in the UK, where the number of women involved in decision-making at the lower chamber level has increased from 9.2 per cent to 18 per cent, and in Government women are assigned five of the 22 posts.

"The attitude towards a female politician is extremely interesting. She enters a male-dominated world in which she is treated as a man. Not even for a minute did they try to understand the message that I used to motivate my political decision. I was presented in the media as totally wrong in opinion, with no right whatsoever to respond to the accusation. A woman is offered no accommodation in politics. Politics is a male-dominated world. So is business." (M.K. , Stara Zagora)

".....politics is not a cozy placeespecially for women. The methods and tools which people who surround you use are not always pleasant to observe. But it is behind the curtain and it is like that everywhere." (Zlatka Ruseva, Deputy Minister of Law and Legal European Integration, Demokratsia newspaper, August 24, 1999)

"Despite the fact that I still see distrust from men when a woman rises into status, I think that men are starting to reconsider a lady's capacities.... It is difficult to face a male audience and try to convince them about something. In principle, not only Turkish men, but also men in general find it difficult to take advice from women." (Emel Etem-Toshkova, public representative, Deputy-Chairman of the Movement for Rights and Liberties, Sega newspaper, February 19, 2000)

It is not an overstatement to say that Bulgarian parties think of 'their' women members as weaker, riskier men.

The internal party systems, regulations and attitudes, the access to decision-making, resources and information preclude equal participation in decision-making for women. This turns political parties, even those with many female members, into men's clubs.

Psychological barriers hamper women who want to take an active role:



Regina Indshewa

Second-generation full-time working mother of three, graduate of Moscow State University's Institute of African and Asian Studies in 1975, eye-witness of the Lebanese civil war of 1984-87 and the Bulgarian perestroika 1987-89 as radio journalist and translator, co-founder of the Bulgarian Women's Union in 1993, initiator of the first shelter for battered women in Bulgaria. Developed a long-lasting relationship with civil society and an outstanding attachment to grassroots and alternative ways of organizing. Co-founder and chief executive of the Women's Alliance for Development with a Gender and Development Resource Centre and a Leadership Training Centre.

Areas of Expertise:

Main: Gender mainstreaming and institutional mechanisms for gender equality
Secondary: Constraints to political and economic participation of women
Multidisciplinary: Gender impact of structural adjustment policies.

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they don't like competing by men's rules; they feel too susceptible to put an opinion across firmly. This combined with the frequent incidence of low self-esteem can lead them to give up easily.

Party systems function on the basis of male solidarity. Among women, no such solidarity exists, because where





attempts are made to create it women are implied to be experiencing an inferiority complex. Female politicians are afraid to identify themselves with the 'weaker gender'. This, in itself, constitutes the most effective strategy of maintaining male dominance ever invented!

Political parties do not care at all about the three-fold burden women bear. Women cannot abandon paid work and their families when they join a political party. There is

a danger of burn-out because of lack of support and appreciation of responsibilities.

To many the image of the female politician is one of "deviation from nature," - she's either a bad mother or has an inferiority complex.



Iljana Perzanska

PAZARDJIC: A CASE OF GOOD PRACTICE ?

Yet there are some good examples as well.

"We carried out a sociological survey which produced almost perfect results. We discussed with the election candidates the results of each meeting with their constituents, advising the candidate which issues needed to be stressed in following meetings and which issues aroused greatest interest in the constituency. The method which we used during these meetings to determine the area of problems turned out to be extremely efficient. In our survey we wanted to pay greatest attention to young people in general rather than to men. We wrote each participant a personal, friendly letter. In Pazardjic, we observed no indications of different treatment of women.

We concluded that: women are self-confident and that they are applying for decision-making positions. We worked with other NGOs to start an impressive number of work teams. On a more personal level, I provided all the information I had on the work of NGOs and municipal structures. Now I have a direct perspective and direct participation in these. In our brochures and pamphlets, we stressed the importance of family and various social issues. Not only did members of the Democratic Union take part in this process but also a great number of experts in various areas of interest. Brochures were distributed at each meeting. If a program like ours was purely party-oriented it would not be effective; it would lack the common human touch, the personal element. We stressed the importance of developing closer relations with various women's associations. As regards our "No Drugs" youth program we started an initiative which led to the establishment of a school for parents - which was attended solely by mothers.

The Electoral Campaign
of the Union of Democratic Forces,
Pazardjic, Bulgaria
1999

Share good news with a colleague!

If you know someone who is interested in learning about empowering women in changing societies in Central and Eastern Europe, please fill out the form below and send it to the Editor of Fair Play magazine: Women's Alliance for Development, 52 Neofit Rilski Str. Sofia 1000, Bulgaria; e-mail: wad@infotel.bg, and we will send them a sample copy.

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Elena Mashkova is a sociologist with a particular interest in the gender aspects of employment and business. She is director of the women's NGO Femina, based in Naberezhnye Chelny in Russia, which is involved in education and research.

Eloquently probing where labor laws fail private sector women

Interviewer: Is it hard raising your son all by yourself?

Respondent: Well you must understand what times we're going through ... Sure, it's hard!

Interviewer: With the father around ...

Respondent: No, I don't think ...

socio-economic position of the sexes.

Many women interviewed complained that, due to their workload, they were unable to bring up their children and had to go to their parents for help. The survey revealed an increasingly widespread phenomenon, differing much from the way different generations helped each other in the Soviet period, when a young mother worked, leaving her child entirely in the care of a still

with racketeers. They did not deny that it occurs though:

"Looks like our foreman himself deals with it. We do not. I don't know who pays and how much. Maybe nothing is paid. I really don't know!"

(Interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region)

In Arzamas and Naberezhnye Chelny women shared first-hand experience of dealing with it:

WHAT'S THERE TO LIKE



"I know him. He comes here sometimes. Deals directly with the owner. She tells me: 'So-and-so is coming. Give him whatever he wants.' He comes and I give it to him. He asked to let him know if anyone is bothering me. Promises protection."

(Elena, 21, market vendor, Arzamas)

Where are they, those fathers? He is either out of work waiting for something to come by or using his whole precious wage for drink! I don't feel I'm disadvantaged in any way because my son is growing up without his father around. Here's our dear father – showing up once a month with Pepsi Cola and Kinder Surprise. So awfully kind of him. He earns a lot, though. More than I do.

Interviewer: Do you get alimony?

Respondent: The thing is, we're not divorced officially. It's just that we don't live together."

(Interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region):

Women who run households and have young children associated their financial problems with the unequal

young grandmother. Among our respondents there was a pensioner, a news stand vendor who said she worked to help her daughter nurse her nine-month-old baby rather than to add to her pension.

And every respondent, regardless of age and background, emphasized the need for women to do some out-of-home work, for the sake of her personal and financial independence.

In the context of gender identity and violence against women we were first and foremost interested to know how and whether women employed by small businesses how and whether they had to deal with racketeers. Respondents from the Moscow Region and St. Petersburg said they had never had any personal contact

"Well ... There's no racketeering as such... I would put it down as free performances for the racketeers. And we've had enough of that. On several occasions we have had to perform all night long, for nothing. We are now trying to avoid this, because working like that is unbearable." (Svetlana, 25, restaurant singer, Arzamas)

A female manager of a trading business actually sounded most categorical on the subject:

"Oh no! Yes, it was some time ago, some time in 1992. But now criminals have lost any interest in trade. We get

▶▶
more bother from the police these days, from the various inspectorates, from administrative regulations. For example, as we opened an outlet recently, we had to pay a large fine to the fire inspectorate, because the door of the shop opened inwards, not outwards as per the regulations. That's all right, of course, I cannot deny it's important, but rules and regulations seem to be propagating incessantly. Sometimes they are hard to keep pace with."

"You mean these bodies extort money?"

"Well no ... That'd be stretching it, no. But they want to be paid kind of increased attention."

In many cases women's reluctance to talk about racketeering and other criminal manifestations suggests they are being scared.

WHAT'S THERE TO LIKE?

During the survey a small wholesale market in Golitsino, Odintsovo District, was observed by one of the interviewers. In the space of one and a half hours, two groups of two to three people made the vegetable vendors 'pay' for their trading spots. When one told the second group she had just paid, her assistant nudged her and paid the racketeers. Later on those very women flatly denied that they were being forced to pay racketeers. It should be noted that the remuneration system in small wholesale markets allows racketeers to extort money from vendors, not their employers; a vendor pays racketeers from her own pocket not from sales proceeds. Employers do not regard these payments as overheads.

Judging by the respondents' eagerness to discuss sexual harassment in this workplace, this is widespread and an intense concern. None of our respondents said

they had tried standing up for themselves. The most common strategy seems to be accepting the rules of the game:

"Never with co-workers ... but there have been several times when the managers have been involved. There's a rule here: if you refuse rudely, you'll lose your job, if you don't, it'll go further. You've got to find some clever way out. Diplomatic, you see. Building up relations ... That's sure no easy thing, but I've succeeded on several occasions." (Svetlana, 25, restaurant singer, Arzamas)

Turning men down usually results in sacking.

"We have an assistant manager, Fyodor. He is in charge of the office cleaners. He has a small office on the first floor, so he harasses the first floor cleaners. Offers them some togs free, saying he doesn't need them. If a girl takes any he starts harassing her. There was once a girl here fool enough to take some. When he started harassing her, she got frightened and tried to give him a wide berth. He told her she would be out of there.

Two weeks later she got sacked." (Lida, 48, St. Petersburg)

One serious violation which appears virulent in the small business sector is non-contract work. This was confirmed by two-thirds of respondents. Sometimes a business is even registered under the name of its women employees.

"The goods do not belong to me. The owners executed all the documents in my name, so that now I have to handle tax payments, keep a shop book and file my income declaration every year. Naturally, I myself had to pay all the fines." (Faniya, 49, hired vendor, 'Alan Market', Naberezhnyye Chelny)

Another widespread phenomenon is 'off-the-payroll' payments forming a large proportion of a wage. The employer tries to present the situation as beneficial for the employees

themselves. These 'benefits', soon prove to be the reverse when a woman or her child gets sick, if she takes a vacation and for her pension calculations.

Off-the-payroll payments even interfere with women's reproductive rights; even if a woman is allowed to take maternity leave, she will be paid from the social security funds according to the payroll data.

The working routine is also left entirely to the employer's discretion. While many respondents said there were no conflicts over their work routine, quite a few complained of growing fatigue, feeling bad and being unable to recover during time off because of the heavy load of household chores.

Almost all respondents complained about their health. The majority, however, were unable to take courses of treatment. In one interview a 27-year-old food store saleswoman was asked why she kept working despite having two broken fingers. It turned out the sick leave payments calculated from her official wage were so meager she couldn't afford to get proper treatment.

Interviewers often came across shop assistants and vendors who, for the same reason, worked despite a high temperature or signs of acute respiratory disease, etc., thus putting in jeopardy not only their own health but also that of the people around them.

The majority of women work in severe conditions. It is important to note that, for the most part, the existing laws do not qualify such conditions as harmful, so women workers are not entitled to any allowances.

"At first I had to sell at different spots, so I had to work, come rain or shine... Naturally I got sick, my kidneys got sick. But who cares? Of course, there's a toilet, for those who have the money. And if the stuff won't sell, you really don't feel like spending these two rubles on the toilet." (Faniya, 49, market vendor, Naberezhnyye Chelny)

Employers spend as little as possible on the proper arrangement

of workplaces; sanitary and hygienic working conditions are the first things they sacrifice when economies have to be made.

In the Odintsovo in the Moscow Region, respondents had an animated debate about a fire in a cafe on Mozhaiskoye Highway, caused when a cheap gas cylinder exploded. Two female employees who received burns and were poisoned by the fumes were rushed to intensive care. They were highlighting it as yet another accident of its kind, indicative of the culture of neglect.

"I didn't work here in winter. The girls say they all caught bad colds, were so awfully sick. When I was hired two months ago, I, too, caught a cold. It really is hard work when you think about it. No conditions whatsoever, so you've got to spend the 500 rubles you're paid on medicine. The owner says: 'If something is stolen, it's your fault.' So there's no napping at work. So if you're working round-the-clock, you can't even take a short nap."

(Olya, 25, shop-girl, railway station, Naberezhnye Chelny)

The majority of women workers interviewed in the Moscow Region said their employers complied with the law by making provision for an annual vacation.

In St. Petersburg, Arzamas, and Naberezhnye Chelny the majority of the respondents were either granted a vacation without pay or no vacation at all, which was confirmed not only by the women workers but also by their employers:

"We agreed at the very beginning that we wouldn't do this, that is, we wouldn't make sick leave or vacation payments" (Takhmad, shop owner, Naberezhnye Chelny)

But few women who do get a vacation use it completely for rest and recuperation. For the most part women spend holiday time at their dachas, helping their children and aged parents, repairing their homes, etc.

Women working in small businesses are the most disadvantaged group in terms of rights. Owing much to the contradictory nature of their social status (semi-marginal employment), women are, in fact, deprived of the chance to seek protection from the state and have no employment rights.

The Labor Code norms do not seem to be effective in the private sector. With no enforcement mechanism provided, the situation can hardly be expected to improve in the near future.

Infringement of the rights of

female employees in small business is not only a major social concern to many. This is suggested particularly by the lines along which a new Labor Code is being elaborated. Unfortunately, the interests of hired labor are sacrificed to the interests of small and big business.

By its very nature, law is designed to protect the present and to prevent misfortunes in the future. It becomes useless, however, if people do not value the present.

So many of our respondents emphasized the fact that with laws being so often impracticable, the arbitrary rule was dominating far and wide. The pity of it is that they viewed law as something that has nothing to do with real life, something that was not written for them. Combined with the readiness to bear it, to be discriminated against and exploited, this creates conditions for the total breakup of all social relationships.

Russian society is facing the problems it hasn't dealt with before. Yet their solution would help the population adjust to the sweeping reforms underway in the country. What we need now is new institutional mechanisms, new schemes of state regulation, new laws and new forms of workers' organizations.

„Sehnsucht-Transzendenz-Ritual“, Ludmila Belova's in the Evangelische Stadtkirche, part of the 1994 Frauenperspektiven exhibition in Karlsruhe, Germany. Plaster moulds of human hands are foreign objects, representing a dimension between the visible and the unseen.

■ Ludmila Belova



INTERVIEW

Z J: My first question comes from the last millennium, the 20th century that is, when you were named Woman of Europe. Can you describe the situation?



Z S: That was awarded by the Special Commission of the European Union for 1993 and I received it in November 1992. Originally the prize was awarded to women laureates from EU countries and they wanted to demonstrate that Eastern Europe would be welcome to join, so for the first time even non-member states were allowed to participate. Therefore the prize was awarded to Czechoslovakian women for the first and the last time. I did not know that something like that was going to happen; it was decision of Czechoslovakian jury of national Czech and Slovak journalists and I remember that my friends from Mlada Fronta and Lidove Noviny phoned me in Bratislava to say I'd been awarded the prize, as a local laureate and then as the EU winner.

At first I thought it was a joke and then - because at that time we had a publishing house - my question was: "Is there any money involved?" (laugh).

In fact, there was no money in it, it was just a great honor.

At that time it was a very difficult situation in the country because Czechoslovakia was just about to split and we were facing a sort of fear of possible dictatorship and nationalist movements were rising. I remember that at that time even my personal bodyguards suffered attacks, even here in the office, and I had to have a guard to get me home. So, the situation was quite black. And everybody, my friends, thought this was wonderful, because this prize would help us a lot.

Z J: What happened in London then?

Z S: In 1968 I was a refugee in

Great Britain, so standing now in London and being given this prize I felt that I had to say that it was very touching moment for me, because perhaps my journey to democracy started in that very same place. At that time for me as a girl from behind the Iron Curtain every day was

ZUZANA SZATMARY

BY ZUZANA JEZERSKA

**Journalist,
philosopher,
human rights activist**

DO you ever get the feeling that, no matter who people are, you've heard their opinions somewhere before? I do. I know nothing's new on the planet. However, in this age of globalization ideas are transported and perceived so quickly and easily that we are perhaps losing the skill of silent analysis. We've turned into consumers, not creators; if we basically agree with the idea then we adopt it with scarcely any hesitation. Sometimes I think we do not have the time and courage to be ourselves. **Zuzana Szatmary, represents an exception. Maybe you agree with her, maybe you don't. But she is definitely very much her own person.**

- Zuzana Jezerska



very difficult but very useful because I was learning a lot. So I said yes, it was a very hard time but it was a start of a circle that brought me here now and I had to thank Britain and the people who were so patient

with we refugees. And I noticed that one British person and another lady were crying and another was very angry. And my manager came to me afterwards and told me that I had to correct the speech because “you know there are animosities inside the EU and you are not allowed to say good things only about Great Britain.” So they said I had a chance to correct my speech. In the

I am a big, big opposer of what is called collective rights.

afternoon there was a meeting of all the laureates so I could apologize. I didn't think they really meant me to apologize because I felt I had been awarded for what I was. What a political mistake!

In the afternoon I had a sort of short lecture on Europe being not a homogenous entity, Europe as a community of communities which do not have a common history. And that one significant feature of Europe is that it is the only part of the world capable of very deep self-reflection. Europe could reflect upon the big burden it has generated - three of the worst things, that is communism, colonialism and fascism. And it's up to us now to correct what we have done because now we are facing consequences and possible exclusion awaits anybody neither in the West nor in the East.

Oh, then it started: “You bloody intellectuals, you want hanging,”; “How long are you going to make us guilty for everything?”; it was like being in a pub. So I just thought what was this all about, what I was doing here?

Z J: There has been a lot of misunderstanding in the last millennium. Perhaps the situation is different now. What do you think of the current position of the Central and Eastern Europe in the political environment of today?

Z S: The first and very important issue for me from the outset - and when I say the outset I mean the time after 1989 - was that we, everybody in this region, relied very much on belief. And if we agree that the belief starts where the facts end, that means that we did not work with the facts. And the facts represent the real analysis of the status of society under Soviet rule and we were not aware of what had happened to all of us. To me, what happened was the total destruction of our hearts and our souls. And we believed democracy was so attractive, that with one small click we would adopt everything that came from the West. And we did not

I am a big fan of individual rights and to me every human being is a unique entity with his or her rights...

realize that this is also difficult in Western countries. We lacked psychological attitudes, demographic attitudes, historical studies, we did not know the real function of secret police, the real influence of party pressure groups.

The main mistake we people from ‘the underground’ made, was that we concentrated too much on resistance and not enough on knowledge. Because if you believe you will win, you have to be ready to take over and build. This is a common historical mistake.

I wrote an article in 1999 in *Kulturny Zivot*, in which I refer to the Bible, and say that we need 40 years to build a new society. And 40 years is the amount of time required by Jews who wanted to enter the Promised Land. If you look at the map you will see that the distance between Egypt and the Promised Land is very short and you could cover it in two weeks, walking. How was it that it took them 40 years? It was only the third generation that was allowed to enter Promised Land and build the New Kingdom. Because only the people from the third generation could forget what it was to be a slave.

Z J: What do you think of the women's movement?

Z S: I am very often in conflict with members from human rights movements, various NGOs and politicians because I am a big, big opposer of what is called collective rights. Because both world wars, but also local wars, start with coverage of minority or ethnic rights. I am a big fan of individual rights and to me every human being is a unique entity with his or her rights which must be constructed and created so that every person is not only granted these rights but has the right to use them. And this must be part of the reason why I don't like the collective; I don't like groups and associations. Perhaps, some might say I am anarchist. I am an individualist but in the sense that - I think I've proved it - I share my life, my experience; I share troubles with those who need it.

Based on historical experience in this region I no longer believe in any type of collective action. Because if you have too many people to take decisions or too many people to agree on decisions that means nobody takes responsibility.

To me, freedom means the freedom of choice; if some people feel much safer or if they feel they can reach something of common interest if they associate with one another, that's fine. I think it's my duty to help them, if I can. So I think I am not able to generalize on what I think about the women's movement. If I feel like they are fighting for something which is also my problem, I could join in.

The democratic processes that gave women hope for an improvement in their situation have ground to a halt in Belarus. Its journey towards admission to the European Union has been stopped - and thus have we lost a chance for 'humanization' of life in Belarus.

Following the result of the November 1996 referendum, the principle of power-division was destroyed, the regime of personal power of President Lukashenko was effectively legalized.

There are no women in high positions in government, despite their wide involvement in just about all other spheres of activity - and the strict power structure provides no opportunities for women to gain access to the corridors of power without manipulation.

Belarus women don't always identify their interests like political representation and equality at work as specific to women, separate from national interests.

Gender relations in Belarus could be defined as a "patriarchal renaissance." Power in Belarus has a clearly marked patriarchal character; not only through men's dominant influence on decision-making and governing at all levels but also in the methods of power, a commanding, administrative style of government and

Petsina Ludmila Semenovna is President of the Women's Independent Democratic Movement in Belarus and is currently working on a dissertation on the women's movement.

Among her most significant credits are participation in the European Council's Gender Equality section in November 1993 and the global summit of women-politicians in 1994 in Taiwan.

Ludmila is also director of the Women's Education and Counseling Center, where she has programs for different categories of women: politicians, leaders of non-governmental organizations on gender problems.

second round.

By this time, the process of forming an independent women's movement was gathering pace. About 20 non-governmental women's organizations emerged, a number of which set their sights on getting women into politics. As a result of the rivalry, however, only nine women became deputies of the 13th Supreme Soviet. Three had been promoted by parties. Representation might have increased in the by-elections of November 1996. Many women reaped positive results but the results were ignored after the referendum and the adoption of a new edition of the



though for the moment they remain in a distinct minority. There are, nevertheless, some such figures in the new parliament, political parties and social organizations. Their road to political power was purely by means of public action. Involvement in mass meetings, election campaigns and work of new parties and non-governmental organizations.

Several factors influence women's political careers, among them absence of solidarity among women and family duties that limit women's potential for political activity. An archaic, hierarchical distribution of social roles still pervades,

COUNTRY SHUNS DEMOCRACY - DASHING HOPES FOR EQUALITY

hierarchy in relations.

The situation in the democratic parties is hardly in favor of women either. Women constitute between 20 per cent and 50 per cent membership of political parties in Belarus.

All political parties willingly use women in election campaign as agitators and observers.

However, women's representation in higher party organs is out of proportion with the number of party members, fluctuating between two per cent and 15 per cent. Women seeking election to parliament can hardly rely on party support.

In the 1989/1990 elections, the abolition of the gender quota system resulted in a mere three per cent (13 out of 260) of deputies being women. In the next election campaign of 1995-1996, there were 100 female candidates (10 per cent of the total). The greatest number - 34 - were put forward by Nadzea. The Communist Party (PCB) nominated 30 and the Belarus Popular Front (BPF) put forward 20.

It is no coincidence that women participated actively in the election campaign and achieved their first political successes, with almost 30 per cent of female candidates going through to the

constitution. More than half of the 199 deputies originally elected were appointed to the Lower Chamber.

In the run-up to the 2000 elections for the House of Representatives, in October, there were 60 female candidates, representing 10 per cent of the total. In the newly-elected parliament women got 10 per cent of the seats.

It should be borne in mind that in the current elections the majority of political parties which have a considerable number of politically-motivated women, did not take part. And it was towards women that the filthiest smear campaigns were directed. But in the mass consciousness at least, it is fair to say that today the negative stereotype of women in politics is weakening. During the campaign, the electorate expected a lot from the women candidates. Many were attracted by their strong morality, their consistent stance on social issues and their non-aggressive style of campaigning.

It is no accident that the women's party Nadzea has been a steady leader in the political rankings for a number of years. Unfortunately, however, instead of taking part in the elections it boycotted them.

A new type of woman politician of an 'open' type has been emerging in Belarus,

according to which women should take a subordinate role. Even in democratic parties women deal with routine, technical work and their opinions are less likely to be heard. Women have less access to political teaching. In this regard, the Women's Independent Democratic Movement has since 1998 offered a program called the School of Women's Political Leadership. The introduction of quotas setting a desired figure for female representation in the ruling organs of democratic parties, is now called for.

An increase in the number of women in politics, as experience elsewhere has shown, results in positive changes in the structure, customs and moral atmosphere of a society. There is no doubt that the formation of gender equality policies in decision-making is a long process which demands a whole system of interrelated transformations. Society must be prepared for these transformations through socialization, culture, mass media and politics. But the main pre-condition for a change in the situation of women is the adherence of democracy. You cannot free a sex without freeing a personality.

Finding creative women: to honour and celebrate their work.

PRIZE FOR WOMEN'S CREATIVITY IN RURAL LIFE

NOMINATION GUIDELINES

Awarded since 1995 by the Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) - an international NGO for the empowerment of women and children - the prize (\$500 each) annually honours women and women's groups exhibiting exceptional creativity, courage and commitment in improving the quality of life in rural communities. The prize aims to draw international attention to the laureates' contributions to sustainable development, household food, security and peace, thus generating more recognition and support for their projects. While rural women are vital in providing examples of sound practice in rural communities, they still do not have full access to the tools needed for development, such as education, credit, land rights and participation in decision-making. By highlighting creative development models, innovations and experiences enhancing the quality of life in rural areas, WWSF hopes to participate in addressing the eradication of extreme poverty and helping arrest the drift to urban areas.

ELIGIBILITY

- Nominees should be women, or groups of women, currently active in rural life whose efforts have not yet been acknowledged by other awards. They may not nominate themselves.
- The nominating organization or individual must have direct experience of the nominee's work. The nominator may not nominate a family member, be a member of the nominated organization, nor can an organization nominate its senior officer (i.e. founder, president etc.). No more than 3 nominees may be presented by the same person/organization in a given year. The nominator commits to organizing an award ceremony if his or her nominee is selected and to invite the media.

NOMINATIONS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

1. A signed letter of nomination indicating how the nominator has known the nominee and for how long.
2. Biographical data on the nominee (full name, age, education, place of work, background) and a detailed history of the nominee's creative project (written by the nominator) including her motivation, innovative aspects, any obstacles overcome, and the impact in the community. Nominations must specify whether the nominee has received or is currently being nominated for other awards.
3. One or two endorsement letters from organizations or individuals other than the nominator and, if possible, additional supporting materials such as newspaper articles or publications.
4. A few good labelled photographs of the nominee(s) for possible publication.



CRITERIA

The long-term impact of the prize will depend on the integrity of the nominators and the quality of their nominations. The prize is an award for successful accomplishments rather than a fund for future projects. The nominee's history (2-3 pages) should demonstrate the creativity, courage and sometimes sacrifice of the nominee in her efforts at the grass roots level to improve life in rural communities. Descriptions should be as specific as possible. Any of the following elements should be emphasised:

- Exceptional courage and perseverance in improving rural life
- Creativity in the approach
- Preservation of and respect for the environment
- Continuing impact on the community

PLEASE SEND COMPLETED NOMINATIONS BY 31, MARCH 2001 TO:

Maria Penaloza, Prize Administrator
Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)

P.O. Box 2001

1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland

For DHL only: WWSF, Hotel Beau Rivage,

13 Quai du Mt Blanc, 1211 Geneve Suisse

Documents should be written preferably in English, French or Spanish.

Tel.: (41 22) 738 66 19

Fax: (41 22) 738 82 48

E-mail: wwsf@iprolink.ch

Web site: www.woman.ch

Laureates are selected by an international jury composed of the WWSF Board of directors and announced officially each year on 30 August, and celebrated on October 15 - World Rural Women's Day - at a special award ceremony in Geneva. Several prize winners are invited to attend the celebration personally. The Women's World Summit Foundation has a commitment to annually award 30 or more creative rural women or women's groups around the world (179 awarded to-date). To read all about the laureates, visit the web site www.woman.ch (Rural Women's Hall of Fame)

International Prize Jury: Filomina Chioma Steady (USA/Sierra Leone); Munira N.A. Al-Nahedh (Saudi Arabia); Ela Bhatt (India); Elly Praderoand (Switzerland/Germany); Wu Qing (China); Gulzar Samji, P.Ag. (Canada); Asha Kambon (Trinidad and Tobago, W.I.) Saida Benhabyles (Algeria).

NOMINATION GUIDELINES 2001 PRIZE FOR WOMEN'S CREATIVITY IN RURAL LIFE

CANDIDATE

Last Name First Name Age:

Address Country Tel/Fax/e-mail:

NOMINATOR

Last name: First name: Relationship to candidate:

Organisation Address:

Country Tel Fax e-mail:

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

-
-
-
-

PLEASE SEND THE COMPLETED NOMINATION BY 31, MARCH, 2001 TO

Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life, Prize Administrator
Women's World Summit Foundation, P.O. Box 2001, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland

Tel.: (41 22) 738 66 19 Fax: (41 22) 738 82 48

e-mail: wwsf@iprolink.ch

Documents should be written preferably in English, French or Spanish.

WHEN her husband left her to look for work abroad, 45-year-old Anna found herself in the position of being a single mother with two teenage sons to support.

She was an economist by profession but forced to retrain for a job in a textiles factory after she was made redundant.

But soon she was out of work again. There used to be many jobs in the textiles industry in Pabianice, Anna's hometown in Poland, but many factories collapsed and were closed down in the early 1990s.

Without a regular job she could no longer afford to pay her rent, and three years ago she was evicted from her apartment. Then the municipality provided her with a room with a kitchen in an old half-derelict house through the so-called social housing scheme. Still unable to find a regular job, she borrowed money from neighbours to buy bread and

grew increasingly depressed. Anna was a not a resourceful type, she was brought up to be dependent on others. Her electricity was cut off. She received a small one-off allowance to buy food and to pay the utility bills but the debt of unpaid rent was mounting up. The municipality took it to the court and a further eviction order was issued. Only this time she was going to be out on the streets. Anna did not tell anyone.

Polish law prohibits such evictions during winter. One morning in April, Anna's son awoke to the sound of someone banging to enter the apartment. Still sleepy, he went to open the door and found his mother had hanged herself from a hook in the door frame.

The next day the judge who issued eviction order was on the radio being interviewed. According to him, it was all Anna's own fault. The municipality officer said the law on evictions is a problem, and that state budget funding to support people whose income fell below the basic level had been cut. That's why they had been powerless to assist Anna, she said.

Last year 41,000 cases were brought to court by local municipalities, housing co-operatives, and private owners against tenants who had not paid their rent. The courts issued 21,557 eviction orders and 9,302 of them were executed. Of 3,803 families accepted on to the list for social housing, only 1,751 were provided with such housing. A total of 5,120 were evicted - on to the streets.

Socialist Left Alliance MP Katarzyna Piekarska calculated that in the first half of last year alone more than 3,000 children were made homeless when their families were evicted. This has prompted the Ombudsman for Children to question the legality of the law on evictions in the Constitutional Tribunal on the grounds that it conflicts with the constitutional principle to protect children's rights.

The law on evictions is flawed from many points of view. The right to social housing is arbitrary. Besides,

even in cases when it is granted, municipalities cannot afford to actually provide it. And in reality, the legal obligations and interests of the municipalities also

TURN O THE

conflict. On the one hand, municipalities act as private owners and want to earn an income from their property. On the other hand, they are supposed to provide social safety nets and care for the poor.

Increasingly, more eviction cases are brought to court by private owners. In the last years many company-owned housing estates were sold in the name of rationalization and making former state-owned mines, steelworks and other factories competitive. But the sale procedures were often corrupt. Tenants were not informed their apartment blocks were for sale until new owners came in with the new contracts, demanding increased rents, or offering to resell the apartments to tenants - but at a large profit to themselves.

Anna's predicament was exacerbated by two factors she could not change: one, she was a woman and two, she was a single parent.

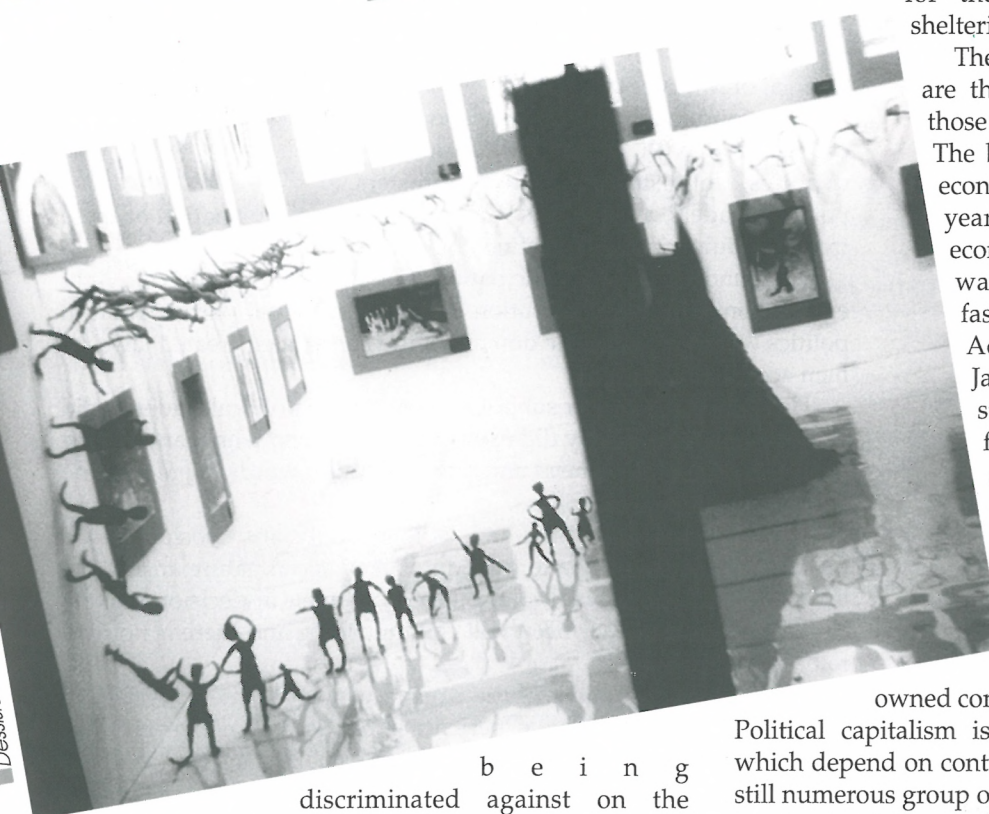
As a woman she was socialized

Ewa Charkiewicz is a journalist, activist and academic lecturer from Poland. With her organization for the Tools for Transition she has been carrying out policy research, co-ordinating international NGO activities and organizing policy dialogues on trade and environment, changing consumption and production patterns, and gender and sustainable development. She has co-ordinated the environmental movement I Prefer to Be in Poland, the ANPED Working Group on Changing Consumption and Production patterns, the Central and Eastern Europe Initiative for Sustainable Consumption and Clean Production, and World Bank External Gender Consultative Group. Her publications include Women, Environment and Sustainable Development. Towards a Theoretical Synthesis (1995, with Rosi Bradotti et al), The Impacts of Globalization and Changes in Consumption and Production Patterns in Central and Eastern Europe (in 1998, with CEECAP), Lost in Transition. Local Markets and Sustainable Practices (1999, with CEECAP). She has been involved with the Karat Coalition since the first discussions about starting the network that took place at NGO Forum in Huairou in relation to Beijing Conference, and contributed to setting up the Karat Working Group on Women and Economy.

into a female dependent role and stood a fair chance of

ED OUT N TO STREETS

■ by Ewa Charkiewicz



being discriminated against on the labour market. Women work for lower wages than men, constitute over 60 per cent of all unemployed in Poland and prevail among the long-term unemployed. Being a single parent Anna and her children were bound to live in poverty.

The major cause of being a single parent is divorce or the death of the spouse. Since 1978 the number of single mothers grew by 27.9 per cent and single fathers by 19.4 per cent. More couples get divorced than married, (214,000 divorced compared with 200,000 who got married last year), and the number of single parents is on the increase. However, despite shouting about its pro-family policies, support for single parents from the Polish government is

wholly inadequate. Ninety per cent of single mothers live below the poverty line, and 50 per cent are in debt. One in eight would like to send their children to work to top up the family income.

The life of single mothers is made even more difficult by the dominant nationalistic-Catholic ideology. Single mothers do not fit into the glossy Catholic family picture.

The vice-president of a major city, Poznan, defined single motherhood as a social pathology.

This sounds so much like the label 'social parasite' used under communism to deny social respect and exclude from society those who did not work for the state. He had to apologize but he did not provide any funds from the Healthy Family Program budget for the Pro Vita Centre, which was sheltering eight women and 17 children.

The budget cuts for the social sector are the result of bad choices made by those who govern in times of transition. The biggest blame lies with misguided economic policies. For the last seven years Poland has been experiencing economic growth. But state revenue was divided unequally and in a fashion that was far from transparent. According to Polish sociologist, Jadwiga Staniszkis, 50 per cent of state revenue goes to support special funds which do not even pass the scrutiny of the parliament. These public funds are channelled to subsidize what Staniszkis calls political capitalism, whereby the new political class have the privileged access to privatized property, lucrative jobs in state-owned companies and public administration.

Political capitalism is further sustained by businesses which depend on contracts from the state, as well as by a still numerous group of workers employed in state owned companies. Meanwhile in a relatively well-off country such as Poland the number of people living in poverty; abject poverty, is growing, and more and more people are being kicked out on to the streets. The problem is not the lack of resources but misguided political priorities, lack of transparency and politics disembedded from the ethics of solidarity. The priority is on marketization and the embedding of political power in economic power - and not on reducing poverty and building sustainable communities.

Ewa Charkiewicz,
Tools for Transition and Karat Working Group on
Women & Economy, echsvb@euronet.nl

■ by Ana Micheva

Is there an actual chance for Bulgarian women to step into the political arena

This was the principal interest of a sociological team setting out to conduct a midsummer survey of Bulgaria's political elite.

The initiative was triggered by data showing a total absence of women participating in the highest levels of decision-making.

The survey was conducted as a result of a suggestion by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation that the Bulgarian Bureau of the United Nations Development Program finance a study investigating the rights and chances for women participating in politics.

In 1999 women constituted 12 per cent of the parliament, the Council of Ministers, and the municipalities. This percentage of women in politics has decreased twice during the last 10 years of transition.

"We" considered it totally illogical that in these years of democratic change women were seemingly being forced to step away from any actual chance to influence the course of their children's lives and the future of their country.

This serious percentage decrease in Bulgaria coincided with an abrupt increase, prompted by societal pressure, of women participating in politics in many Western European countries.

The most obvious examples are France - where it was agreed that women should have 50 per cent representation in central and regional authority structures, and Sweden, which voted for with 40 per cent representation in parliament and the Council of Ministers.

We conducted 115 interviews and discussions with men and women - deputies, ministers, deputy ministers, political leaders, and mayors - to find a possible explanation of these trends in Bulgaria, and to define potential courses of action.

We found that equal participation in politics was considered a right existing only in the Constitution of Bulgaria. Actual participation in politics was considered the domain of men only; men created laws for men accordingly.

However, some of our subjects - mostly male political leaders - did claim that actual equality did exist and that women who wanted to be political leaders went ahead and did so. In other words, there were no barriers for women in politics.

A good number of men and women politicians considered the unchangeable mentality and impediments of social nature among the main reasons for the small percentage of women in decision-making structures. Or, what has been will continue to be and there is nothing to be done about it.

An impressive number of the women who were interviewed, and especially those with longer experience in politics, claimed men isolate women and do not allow them to function as politicians.

Nobody actually speaks on this subject. Au contraire, men praise their women colleagues for showing equal capacity for politics. Yet, again and again women are put on parts of the political lists where they have no chance of selection.

Men make the political arena even less accessible for women in one more way - by allowing a greater proportion of the unpleasant side of transition fall on women's shoulders.

Women constitute the poorer and larger fraction of the unemployed. They are frequently victims of violence and more often forced to work for low payment and no social security. Young women and girls are often forced by their employers to decline some rights they have according to law or they are even turned into sexual targets. Last but not least, women experience the greater burden of responsibility for helping their families survive.

This makes women in Bulgaria a social group, in conflict with



Ana Micheva is a sociologist. She has worked for 25 years in the Bulgarian Academy of Science. She is author of research and publications on problems concerning women and families. Her recent research was on the topic: "Equal rights and equal access of women in the political life in Bulgaria". She is a director of the sociological team, which conducted and summarized the results of this research.
e-mail: assa-m@mail.bol.bg

society, because basic human rights are violated for women of varying age and profession.

There are many potential courses of action and on this subject we saw a curious situation take shape. We can define conditionally two separate groups – one opposing and one supporting the introduction of a principle for quota representation in politics. More specifically, this principle stands for 30 to 40 per cent or 50 per cent representation of women in the higher seats of political parties and in the voting lists for higher-level decision-making positions. In Europe this principle is considered best for giving equal representation of men and women in politics.

Those opposing the quota principle make two main points. First, that women have so many qualities that sooner or later by default they will earn their representation in politics. Second, that introducing the quota principle represents an insult to women, since they need to face men independently and prove themselves a group that deserves to be represented.

Those supporting the quota principle use the substantial 1989 to 1999 decrease in women's representation in politics and the notable decline in the social status of women as a group, to claim that only the

■ Iliana Peritzanska



introduction of a quota principle would help prevent further violation of women's rights.

Though the group opposing the quota principle is made up mainly of men, there are perhaps surprisingly a number of women as well, even leaders of left-oriented women's movements.

The group supporting the quota principle includes mainly women in regional authorities and leaders of pro-European women's professional organizations. Yet it includes some men as well.

WHAT THE BULGARIAN PUBLIC THINKS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

This excerpt is taken from: *"The Bulgarian Woman: social status and political participation"* - a survey representative for Sofia, and carried out in the period August 19-23, year 2000.

TWO-THIRDS of respondents viewed women in politics in a positive light.

The same number of people said they felt women were more compassionate towards people's problems and also more diplomatic. Seventy six per cent of women questioned believe women politicians were more compassionate about people's problems.

Two-thirds of interviewees believe women possess just as much self-confidence as men who practise politics. Sixty per cent feel they work just as hard as men in politics.

Twice as many men as women consider men are more effective in politics.

The following are considered the top five women in Bulgarian politics:

Nadejda Mihailova - 40% (Foreign Minister)
Reneta Indjova - 18% (Interim Prime Minister)
Elena Poptodorova - 11% (Member of Parliament)
Ekaterina Mihailova - 10% (Member of Parliament)
Emilia Maslarova - 7% (Member of Parliament)

Almost half - 49 per cent - of respondents approved of quotas for women in the National Assembly. Ten per cent over that number are women supporting the same idea.

The more educated a respondent the more tolerant they seemed to be of women taking active part in the country's parliament.

A third of the women interviewed expressed no opinion regarding the number of women there should be in parliament.

A total of 13 per cent said they would like to see 50 per cent representation for women; 12 per cent said one-third of representatives should be women. Conversely, support from men lessened, the greater the suggested percentage of representation. It is important to note that there is no substantial gender difference in these public opinion poll results. This leads to the conclusion that women themselves understand the preference of the electorate - for having more men than women in power.

Interview with **Elena Poptodorova** - the only woman to have survived 10 years without a break as a Bulgarian MP

Elena Poptodorova is deputy-chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Committee and sits on the Council of European Affairs, the Security Committee and the Committee for Social, Health and Family Affairs. She is in the Bulgarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Q: Could you please say a few words about yourself, your background and political career?

A: I worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1975 to 1990 and was posted in Italy from 1977 to 1990. When I came back, it was at a time when new people were sought by the Socialist Party (SP), which is the ex-Communist party in Bulgaria and which was desperately trying to transform itself into a modern type of left party. I entered Parliament in 1990, to become today the only woman who has survived 10 years in politics with no interruption in Parliament. There were 11 of us then altogether in Parliament. I was involved with the social-democratic faction of the Socialist party. I still believe that it is extremely important to have a clear social-democratic party or coalition, which is practically a left-center pro-Western type of party.

In the beginning it was an outcry of freedom, let's say, or an outcry of self-defense, rather subordinated and helpless.

A: At the end of 1996 as a result of a serious failure of the SP government and a failed attempt to social-democratize itself, I and a group of my colleagues split to form a new party called the Euro-Left. We ran in April 1997 for the National Assembly as a pro-Western, pro-Nato party. I have been a Euro-Left MP since then.

I am also part of other organizations, one of which is newly formed - a European parliamentarians' organization, which is directly involved in issues of reproductive health and reproductive rights, practically a parliamentary dimension of IPPF (the International Planned Parenthood Federation, a very important global organization dealing with population and development).

Q: Being actively involved in a number of non-governmental organisations, like the Bulgarian Family Planning Association, how would you evaluate the role of NGOs in Bulgaria?

A: I am happy to say, that the NGOs are becoming more mature. It was logical to expect this after the changes in Bulgaria. When you look at the national registry, you will find a startling figure of thousands of NGOs. Of course not all of them are viable. We have now quite a few solid NGOs, and when I say they are maturing, this is because they have started to perceive themselves as actors. In the beginning it was an outcry of freedom, let's say, or an outcry of self-defense, rather subordinated and helpless. It is for now the authorities to realize both that they need the NGOs and that they cannot get rid of NGOs, and to establish ways of smooth interaction with civil

society on decisions to be taken, and not to stay within a limited circle of people.

Q: How democratic would you say Bulgarian parties are today?

A: There is a big difference compared with the beginning of nineties. That was a blissful period, there was real, real in-party democracy, in-party freedom in terms of mutual respect, formation of a party fraction. What I notice now is that parties are turning into establishments with certain hierarchical structures, rules and discipline, where the boss is THE powerful figure. Although this is necessary of course, it should not harm flexibility of the party vis-a-vis public opinion, vis-a-vis some new challenges, for instance the involvement of women in political life.

One thing makes me rather sad: Bulgarians in their secret own selves accept abuse of power, they would say: "Yeah, that is a clever guy."

Q: Bulgarians firmly believe, that politics goes hand in hand with corruption. How do you deal with such a perception?

A: It is very difficult to deal with that. My way of an 'excuse' is that politics generally generate suspicion. The general public is always sceptical about how public power is being used. That's why is so important to have transparency mechanisms to give people at least a certain amount of reassurance. One thing makes me rather sad: Bulgarians in their secret own selves accept abuse of power, they would say: "Yeah, that is a clever guy. This is the mentality of the survivor who is ready to survive at all costs".

And this is the real problem, I would say.

These elections were practically run by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and this is why it was not a problem to impose quotas.

Q: How does the Bulgarian government respond to recommendations from the various human rights committees?

A: It depends on the recommendations. To date, no government has complied with the recommendation concerning the composition of the National Council for Radio and Television, although the issue has been discussed passionately. Whatever a matter of real political power, there is a great reluctance of the respective majority to comply with the recommendations. When it comes to more general norms, it is easier, and this is why we should think, those recommendations regarding women will be taken into account. Again, when it comes to parties, guaranteeing the promotion of women, through their position on, let's say, common lists and ballot sheets, or to

leadership, this again will be a matter of time. There will be partly compliance, not out of common sense or as a natural thing, but a more mechanical approach. There is still a perception of political power as being omnipotent. There is not yet the enlightened, educated view of power being shared. We still have to learn how to share.

Q: What can you say about the role women play in politics in the other CEE countries?

A: There are quite a few women of integrity, very active women and they are listened to in the parliamentary assembly. I am not an extreme feminist, I believe in partnership. First we do need to have enough confident women. In other words, women should not compromise the very idea of professionalism in the

One woman has survived a whole decade in Bulgaria's parliament



name of access to top leadership positions. Professional politics is something new. It needs training and experience. It is a bit courageous for someone to jump straight into politics, Parliament or government, without having had any experience before. And this is what often happens, especially in Parliament. For various reasons, mostly party loyalty, and loyalty to the boss, women make it into top positions.

Q: Do you think that competition among men is tougher than among women?

A: Competition is tough. Even between a woman and a man. But that's maybe the most rewarding of all: when we have more

or less equal competitors and the woman gains. This does not happen very often, but it is good, because everybody competes for his own position. It is one of the reasons why men oppose quotas. Quotas will immediately take positions away from them.

Q: You have served as Council of Europe rapporteur on the elections in Kosovo. What was your special task? What are the findings?

A: As special rapporteur I had to focus on the general humanitarian situation in Kosovo, which meant first of all the situation of refugees, women, children, education. I have observed how women were represented and how they behaved in the elections.

These elections were practically run by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and this is why it was not a problem to impose quotas. The quotas (for women) were very obediently observed. The curious thing was that there are lots of illiterate people in Kosovo. I know of many cases where the husband told the wife how to vote - and not even in secret, according to the rules. So there is a lot to do there in terms of women's self-determination. But they did vote. They were on the election committees. There were quite a few chairing such committees. But much remains to be done especially in the rural areas.

Q: Do you feel you manage to balance work and family life?

A: I think I am the one who suffers most because I don't have enough time for my boy, who needs me. He is 11 years old and until recently he was something between a baby and a boy - a little attention and sweets would do. But now he demands my full attention, my time. I realize that I am the loser for not having enough

time to talk to him. He is now opening himself to the world. I always ask my husband before running for anything and he says, "Yes, do it, we will manage somehow." But there is still a perception of family life, that also needs to change... to make men understand that when they do something themselves, it is not as a special favor to the wife. Men still think that way - about washing the dishes, or doing the laundry, in fact, pushing the button of the machine. I used to get furious about it sometimes, but now I think it's funny and I often laugh to myself.



Kinga Lohmann

Historian and author of articles on African and religious issues. Lived in West Africa for 14 years. Involved in women's projects in Poland since 1995, participated in the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Author and editor of documents, reports and other materials on women's issues. Co-founder and chairwoman of the Women's Association for Gender Equality - Beijing 1995. Initiator, founder and first regional coordinator of the KARAT Coalition (elected for a second time now)-network of women's NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Actively involved in formulating a special Central Eastern European vision regarding women's equal status. Contributor to the presence of the CEE point of view at the UN fora.

When women's NGOs from nine Central and Eastern European countries presented a report to a UN forum two years ago, the vast numbers of the public who gathered to listen were much more interested in the new phenomena of united women from this part of world than the subject itself.

When I am asked by Western journalists (Polish ones do not seem interested) why Polish women don't organize themselves en masse against anti-abortion law or other discriminatory practices against woman, I try to explain that an independent women's movement is only 10 years old, that women's NGOs are few (less than 300). But I think I must not be persuasive; they do not seem clear about that.

The absence of networks throughout the country, that lack of co-operation among women's NGOs is a reality. Its roots perhaps relate to the lack of culture of communication on an equal footing, and a culture of distance that still prevail as a legacy of the communist regime, where a hierarchy (a Polish colloquialism: equals and more equals) and a 'power' were evident at every turn in everyday life, even by petty officials of post offices, administrative bodies and at news stands.

It's a process to change the old habits, and understand and use other rules of communication, so our organizations need time and more frequent face-to-face meetings to gain this new experience.

We complain about the lack of the partnership dialogue between NGOs and government representatives. We complain that our role is not recognized by society. But we don't respect either the democratic rule among ourselves. Women in our region have very low self-esteem, much lower than in the other parts of the world. Therefore leaders of women's NGOs, instead of adopting techniques to try to increase their colleagues', instead opt to decrease it by intimidation. They might say, for example: "You are not professional, you have not enough experience, it's not important what you say," i.e.: "You have no position among us, so your opinion is without any value, you are not feminist, you don't understand women's issues," etc, etc, If you don't share your colleagues' opinion and especially their behavior, there'll be no place for you. If you are determined, you escape to your own non-governmental, where you can finally find freedom of expression and behavior.

We seem to have introduced a hierarchy in our women's movement. Some NGOs consider themselves an elite and don't like to 'descend' and co-operate with others. They may well work for women's rights. For women but not with them.

Women's NGOs organize workshops, training for women. Participants learn some new techniques and there's a bit of moral support but if there is no follow-up to that, they will only feel strengthened for a short period of time. One course is not enough to build self-confidence. There is a big potential and enthusiasm in the women who attend but NGOs don't offer the possibility to use this 'enthusiasm' in practice, even on volunteer basis, within their organizations.

There is no database, no way of assessing the benefit of courses.

You can compare the behavior of leaders to queens with different rights and rules than for others: they need a personal invitation, a personal phone call, a special place and position in any event. A dictatorship is not so far removed from their system of organization management. Their work is of the highest importance; their colleagues' is merely 'administrative' or 'technical', even if they are professional managers, fundraisers, etc.

They claim to build the organization's image but they are

■ by Kinga Lohmann

WHY is a
large network
of women's
NGOs apparently
IMPOSSIBLE
to weave?

building their position and popularity. These leaders often gain experience in the West - but back in their own country they quickly adjust to the local reality.

Some countries in our region will recognize something in the style of 'co-operation' between Polish NGOs. However, this image is not common all over Central and European Europe. Although our communist backgrounds, our economies, histories, cultures, levels of freedom were different in the past years. We didn't know a lot about our neighbors. We are learning about them now and we can also learn a lot of from them.

Since we have a parliamentary election next year in Poland, I've encouraged my colleagues to listen to the Croatian women's NGOs who managed to get women into Parliament at a proportion of more than 20 per cent or to the women from Yugoslavia about their networks and campaigns for the last presidential election.

This article is an abridged version of a piece penned after a group of female writers, publishers and journalists met in Belaggio, Italy, to discuss the situation in their countries and work out a strategy for the development of their regions.

We shared discontent over events on our continent, growing political and social tension, information warfare, and the dramatic worsening of the situation of women in general and women-writers in particular. We hope that these ideas and conclusions will be interesting to many of you, and we look forward to your feedback, as we believe that only through joint efforts of women in many countries we can improve the situation.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 symbolized the beginning of the new era, without the exhausting Cold War, without the cultural isolation between the two parts of the continent. Artists painted on its fragments, poets read their poetry on the ruins, many intellectuals have kept small pieces of it on their bookshelves as a memory of enthusiasm and romantic expectations.

In the first years of the new united Europe, democratic changes started to take place; totalitarian ideology collapsed,

expect to live to see that happen."

The overcoming of the cultural vacuum and the cultural isolation of Eastern Europe stimulated the emergence of many new and talented authors and one of the most remarkable manifestations of this process was the appearance of new women's literature. A prestigious Swedish prize awarded to Svetlana Aleksiyevich, the Nobel Prize awarded to a Polish woman-poet demonstrated that East European women-authors have become a valuable part of the literary world.

Women played an outstanding role in the revival of national literature and identity in a number of post-totalitarian countries. The Armenian poet Sylva Kaputikyan was a symbol of Karabakh Movement; the publisher Lydia Istrati and the journalist Alla Molodanova founded the Women's Liberal Christian Party in Moldova which promoted Romanian culture and language; Salome Pavlychko and other Ukrainian women-poets joined the movement for the revival of Ukrainian culture.

However, this revival was not entirely free of side-effects, including the growth of national-chauvinism and exaggerated influence of religious confessions which caused a kind of - gender-based - censorship banning open criticism of national or religious leaders. It has become virtually impossible to discuss certain aspects of women's life. In

POWER OF THE WORD

NEW EUROPEAN ORDER: WOMEN'S STANCE ON WAR AND PEACE IN 'FREE' EUROPE

■ by Nadezhda Azhgikhina

Nadezhda Azhgikhina, Ph.D in Russian literature, journalist and writer, works as senior writer for *Nesavisimaya Gazeta* (Russian national political daily), co-chair and co-founder of The Association of Women Journalists, vice chair of Women's World (international women writer s' organization). Author of 7 books and brochures, participant of women's movement in Russia since 1990.

censorship and state-party control over publishers and mass media were abandoned. Many books formerly banned by East European authors were published in their countries of origin and later in the West. Cultural workers in different countries were at last able to meet in person: the decade was marked by all kinds of contacts, conferences, discussions and joint projects.

Also in 1989 came the first meeting of Eastern and Western authors - Beyond the Barriers. Russian literary critic Galina Belaya called it "one of the highest peaks of

her whole life". She said, "Suddenly I saw how diverse, rich and friendly the world is, how interesting we are for this world. I saw that it was possible to work, to create, and to discuss literature without turning round to see who is watching you behind your shoulder, without fear. I did not

Poland the adoption of the infamous anti-abortion law did not only cause practical difficulties for women (busloads of Polish women travel regularly to Belarus, ostensibly as tourists, but in fact to obtain an affordable abortion) - moreover, it deprived them of the possibility even to discuss the problem openly. Respectable periodicals, including *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the symbol of democracy in Poland, refuse to publish articles and letters against anti-abortion legislation; the press does not want to endanger its relations with the Catholic Church. In contrast, there are many publications about 'women - murderers of babies', about 'moral values of a true Polish woman' and the like.

Feminists banned from entering country's Catholic churches

In neighboring Catholic Lithuania a similar situation prevails. According to a prominent female journalist Dalya Gudavichute, the church outlawed not only abortions and contraception, but also feminists - they are not allowed to enter Catholic churches.



▶▶ In countries and regions that are experiencing a revival of Islamic and Shari'ah traditions, such as Azerbaijan, Tatarstan and the Russian Caucasus, the situation is even worse. The official media promote obligatory wearing of shawls and veils by women; advise girls to get enrolled in Moslem schools where they are trained to be good wives, rather than professionals, and the value of women's education in general is questioned.

The actual situation of women worsened practically in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Economic reforms and transition to market economy were associated with a crisis of national economies, rapid growth of unemployment (with women making up the majority of the unemployed), deterioration of women's health and disruption of the system of social security. Transitional countries abandoned many mechanisms of social protection of women that used to function under socialism, such as quotas for women in organs of government; maternity payments and other social benefits.

Criminal gangs send thousands of East European women to work in the brothels of Europe; women from Poland and Baltic countries are sold to Scandinavia, Germany, Italy; Albanian women are sold to Italy and Spain, Russian women - to Europe, Israel and Japan.

In all counties of the former Eastern Block pornography and sexist advertising flourish, perceived by some publishers as integral to media freedom. Virtually nothing is said about women's real lives and issues, or about women's movement. Mainstream media portray women either as sex objects or as housewives; the idea of "natural destiny of women" is promoted, while active and independent women are sneered at.

Market reform had a negative impact on women's creative self-expression. Although many brilliant publications at the start of the decade were born by women's creative talent, women today find it harder to get published because publishers traditionally prefer to contract male writers. Many women authors are under-reviewed or ignored by literary critics.

Very often we hear from critics that there is no such thing as women's creative expression, that well-known women-writers are rare exceptions.

Most low-paid journalists and assistant editors are women, while most editors-in-chief, heads of writers' unions and directors of large periodicals are men. In Latvia, according to the journalist Anita Kekhre, up to 90 per cent of the total number of journalists are women, however, they either do not dare to write about women's situation or do not understand the meaning of women's agenda. Women's rights are generally not perceived as part of the human rights concept. Alexander Tkachenko, director of the Russian PEN-Center, during a conversation about women's rights, honestly admitted, "I do not understand anything about it."

Fitting into the framework of equality

WOMEN'S participation in ruling bodies cannot be considered a whim or fashion. When women represent more than a half of the population (52 per cent), they must participate in the decision-making process.

Women's absence from the decision-making process has led to a situation in which a range of problems related to women's status, family and children were ignored and left unsolved by legislative means. A feeling of responsibility to correct the imbalance between genders has to be provoked among politicians for anything to be done about it.

Although they represent 52 per cent of the whole population, women hold only nine seats out of 101 in the Parliament; however, that is an increase compared with the previous Parliament (where women represented only 4.9 per cent). The number of female mayors in villages and towns is also increasing.

The proportion of high-ranking females remains unchanged, however. There is one female minister, two female heads of department, and one woman head of a high educational institution. The proportion of women in local administration is only nine per cent and in Parliament it is eight per cent. Of 16 ministers, only one is a woman, and only seven out of 49 deputy ministers are women.

But the decision-making structures have become aware that women's participation is essential for a political framework of equality as well as promotion and ensurance of human rights. The decision has been taken to set up within the Ministry of Labour, Social Care and the Family, a Division for Family Protection, which would promote directly the principle of equality between genders. A schedule defining the key actions that need taking in order to improve the situation of the woman in society has also been drawn up.

The legislative body has created a parliamentary sub-committee that deals with the issue of equal opportunities. In May 1999, a presidential decree was signed for the establishment of a committee on Women and Family Issues.

This validates attempts to implement declared rights and equalities. In addition, local administrations have started to meet more frequently with non-governmental organizations and issues related to women's rights in the Republic of Moldova are addressed when they do.

Breakdown by Political Party

	Women	%	Men	%
The Communists' Party of Moldova	4	10	36	90
The Democratic Convention of Moldova	2	8	24	92
The Block for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova	1	4	23	96
The Party of Democratic Forces	2	18	9	82
Total	9	9	92	90

Source: The Annual Statistics of the Republic of Moldova for 1997, Chi_inu, 1998.

According to the current legislation, women's status in the Republic of Moldova does not represent an obstacle to women's presence and advancement in the new democratic institutions set up after independence was declared on August 27, 1991.

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, adopted on July 29, 1994, is the foundation of state legislation. There are a number of other acts that contain regulations providing for the equality of all citizens: the Criminal Code, the Civil Code, and the Family Code. Women's rights represent a constitutive part of human rights regulation. The areas in which the rights of women were defined by various laws are numerous and include: fundamental rights and liberties, the right to vote, participation in decision making, access to education, promotion of occupation and its security, fair remuneration, social protection, equality in the family.

■ global

UN report calls for radical global governance reform

„Globalization with a human face“ is the theme of this year's Human Development Report (HDR), commissioned by the United Nations Development Program.

Globalization offers great opportunities for enriching people's lives and creating a global community based on shared values, according to the report. But markets, it argues, have been allowed to dominate the process. The result is a „grotesque“ and dangerous polarization in income and living standards between a minority of people benefiting from the system and those that are passive recipients of its effects. „The world is rushing headlong into greater integration, driven mostly by a philosophy of market profitability and economic efficiency,“ says report co-ordinator Richard Jolly. „We must bring human development and social protection into the equation.“

Main findings:

The world's top three billionaires now have assets greater than the combined gross national product of all 48 least-developed countries and their 600 million people, according to the report.

In a global economy increasingly based on knowledge and computer links to the Internet, the gap between a small 'connected' elite and the 'unconnected' majority is also increasing at alarming rates. An invisible barrier has emerged, the report says, which „true to its name, is like a world-wide web, embracing the connected and silently, almost imperceptibly, excluding the rest.“ In nearly all these trends, women are bearing the heaviest burden, it finds.

Crime syndicates are prime beneficiaries of globalization. The six major international ones are believed to gross \$1.5 trillion a year. Illegal trafficking in weapons is growing, destabilizing societies and governments and arming conflicts in Africa and Eastern Europe. Another thriving industry is illegal trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation, „a form of slavery and an inconceivable violation of human rights,“ which is estimated to be approaching \$7 billion a year.

The report also highlights the „squeeze on caring labor“, heightened by globalization. The tasks of providing for dependents, children, the elderly, the sick and the immediate community are essential to the formation and sustenance of human capabilities and have been mostly provided by women's unpaid labor and by state-financed care services. The shifts in employment patterns brought about by globalization have promoted, and to some extent enforced, the participation of women in wage employment; yet in most countries, women continue to carry the double burden of also providing care services, ending up exhausted. Meanwhile, the pressures from globalization on state revenue have led to a deterioration or dismantling of publicly provided care services. The report says the problem is that the market does not reward, and even penalizes, individuals who spend time in these activities unless they perform these through market-based services, which only the better-off can afford. The result is an often over-looked deficit of care services that not only destroys human development but also undermines economic sustainability.

■ regional

WOMEN from non-governmental organizations of Central and Eastern Europe have come together in a Women's Caucus to address the interests of women and girls subjected to racial and ethnic discrimination. It was formed at a meeting held in Warsaw in November in advance of the South Africa 2001, World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

They plan to urge the international community to take note of the rabid gender, racial, ethnic and religious discrimination in our sub-region and implement a gender analysis in all areas of the World Conference Against Racism.

The statement:

1. Democracy in Central and Eastern European and Commonwealth of Independent States countries remains fragile because of the lack of democratic tradition, capacity and resources. In the search for new national identities, there are strong forces advocating patriarchal traditions and models that deny women's rights and limit their roles in society. In some countries women are being relegated back to family responsibilities. Due to the intersection of gender, racial and ethnic stereotyping as well as sexual orientation women from minority groups are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. Further, as new democracies allow greater religious expression and freedom, there are some who take advantage of these freedoms to curtail women's rights. Rising nationalism, xenophobia and intolerance towards ethnic minorities, including the Roma people, strongly affect the living conditions and rights of women from these groups. State policies often neglect the needs of minority women in areas such as access to education, information, health care and social services.

2. Economic transition has caused deterioration of the economic status of women which has led to increased poverty, unemployment, and lower wages. In the context of globalization, women's poverty makes them vulnerable to various kinds of exploitation. The profits of the multinationals often rely on the exploitation of women whose economic survival is endangered by racism, gender discrimination and poverty. Thousands of Eastern European women are lured into underground networks with promises of jobs in West. They are forced to prostitution, sold and detained. For many Eastern Europe women the sex industry is the only place where they can find work without experience and without foreign languages.

3. Recent conflicts have highlighted the fact that women and girls are exposed to human rights abuses and multiple discrimination including racial, ethnic, gender and religious discrimination. They have destabilized economies, weakened democratic processes by drawing economic resources away from development and caused the proliferation of drugs, weapons, sexual exploitation, rape, enforced pregnancy, sexual violence with intent to affect ethnic composition, trafficking of women and HIV and AIDS.

Women's economic networks held their first regional conference

in free Serbia - in Belgrade and a town called Backa Topola in Vojvodina - from October 27 to 29, 2000.

Organisers **Sanja Popovic-Pantiche** and **Snezana Paranosic** from the Association of Business Women (Belgrade) and **Erikka Pap** from Femina Creativa based in Subotica welcomed participants from Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Poland and Serbia and Montenegro.

Cross-border co-operation was the focus of the project - Regional Women's Economic Networks; rebuilding economic links between Serbian pro-democracy

businesswomen with their counterparts in neighboring countries, in order to exchange experiences with representatives of women's business associations from neighboring countries, which have passed first phase of the democratization.

The role of media is crucial in networking and existing regional media such as Fair Play, and the Internet will be utilised to spread the business success stories and to put women from in touch with one another.

■ albania

Institutions and the advancement of women

STATE structures for women have been setting up in Albania since the end of 1991. Most notable among them was the Sector for Women at the Labor and Salaries Committee. In 1994 this was promoted to the status of a directorate at the Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance and in 1996, it rose again to become the State Secretariat on Women and Youth at the Ministry of Culture. In 1997, it went back under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as the directorate Women and Family. That was until July 1998 when it was turned into an institution dependent upon the Council of Ministers - the Committee on Women and Family. Its duties are:

- implementation of governmental policies on women and family
- co-ordination of programs encouraging equality between women and men at central and local government level
- implementation and evaluation of governmental programs on women and family
- proposing laws or amendments to existing legislation
- support and co-ordination of activities with relevant non-governmental organizations

The duties of the Committee on Women and Family have been constructed according to recommendations contained in a series of documents of various world conferences on women and the Beijing Platform in Action. The Albanian government has composed its own Platform on Women, focusing on four aspects it considers top priority:

- participation of women and men in governance and in decision-making
- economic rights of women
- social aspects with special emphasis on the fight against violence against women
- women's health

Though the Council of Ministers has set before the Committee on Women and Family a series of very important duties, its evaluation as a state structure is low and its identity

You can see creations from a straw art exhibition -Women's Ethno Creativity, which was staged specially for the conference, featured on the inside back cover.

Conclusions

1. To promote demands and suggestions for developing female entrepreneurship among the international financial institutions which are likely to allocate funds to the FRY - primarily the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. This will include a lobbying group for women's rights at international organizations and institutions (the European Parliament, UN etc.).

2. To form a Regional Venture Bank (financial co-operative) aimed at networking of women's businesses in the region.

3. To lobby governments to form ministries for small and medium sized businesses with a

special department supporting women's entrepreneurship.

4. To use the media in regional women's networks and the Internet to promote economic initiatives and exchange of information.

5. To continue organising meetings of the Women's Regional Economic Network.

The next meeting will be organised by the ARNA**** in Macedonia during the first half of 2001. The focus will be the structure and functioning principles of the network..

6. Associations and women-entrepreneurs from the region should celebrate Businesswomen's Day on the third Friday in May (date designated by the Business Women's World Association).

unclear. When it was a directorate in the ministry, the problems of women could be represented in the government through the minister. Now, however, as an independent committee, it is neglected in inter-ministry relations. This is a result of the lack of knowledge of its structure of functions and also of the under-estimation of the notion of problems of women in comparison with the other great concerns the government has had to deal with during transition.

Another important function of the Committee on Women and Family is to encourage data collection. We are trying to organize our information and documentation office on the rights of women and children in order to make it usable by all state officials, researchers and NGO representatives that work on this field.

The co-operation with focal points of various ministries and especially with the Ministry of Education, of Health and of Culture has helped us with the collection of data.

Besides the training programs that we have conducted, we have an agreement with the GENDER program of NPA for further training programs for the employees who deal with gender equality in prefectures and ministries.

We have suggested to the Council of Ministers to change the name of the committee and be called The Committee for Equal Opportunities. This committee would have a similar but broader technical staff and also a decision-making body.

We have also suggested that a Council for Equal Opportunities with seven to nine members be elected. Representatives would include women and men with experience in government service, in scientific and cultural research institutions and in the non-governmental organizations. The council would approve the policies of the committee and propose specific measures for the advancement of women to the government.

We are currently working for the drafting of a law on gender equality. Technical assistance from the Council of Europe has already been approved for this.

This is our strategic mission in the century we have just entered. That mission can only be accomplished by raising awareness of the gender viewpoint in Albanian politics and pushing for the application of the gender perspective in all state policies.

Lavdie Ruci

Chairwoman of the Committee on Women and Family in Albania

The sisters of Hipsters: A lighter look at gender

In the early years of the next Millennium there will be major changes to the way we live. Huge numbers of people will begin to live underground. No more will we seek out the sun and lie on beaches. Disappointingly, for the ladies at least, BUILDERS' BUMS, that great British tradition, will be a thing of the past.!!!

Don't worry, girls, that's just David Ballard, chief executive of the UK's Glass and Glazing Federation, explaining in a press release that it doesn't actually have to be that way (not if we all stop wasting energy now by having double-glazed windows fitted in our homes, anyway.)

But just imagine... What if?

BILLY the builder opened his wardrobe door and grabbed a pair of jeans off the rail. "That's funny," Billy said to himself, as he pulled them on. They didn't seem to fit quite right. Almost but not quite. He glanced over his shoulder into the wardrobe mirror and immediately saw why. The jeans had been cut low at the back and neatly tailored. So now if he bent over or bent down he'd be exposing the upper portion of his rear. Just like the sort of jeans builders always used to wear (whether their rears were attractive or otherwise) until all those skin cancer scares.

Suddenly it dawned on him. "Mercy me!" he exclaimed. "I've been visited by the Sisters of Hipsters!"

He pulled on a different pair of jeans but it was no use. They had been tailored as well.

When Billy the builder arrived at the construction site he found that he was not alone. His mates Barry and Brian had been visited by the shadowy women's group as well.

The three headed off to the portable building where the spare jeans were kept in anticipation of just such an occurrence. There were a couple of police officers standing around. "What's up, mate?" Billy the builder asked Fred the foreman. "Have some rogues been stealing bricks off us again?"

"I'm afraid not, mate," Fred the foreman said. "I'm afraid we've been done by the Sisters of Hipsters."

"What?" choked Billy, Barry and Brian in chorus. "All 20 pairs??"

"I'm afraid so," Fred the foreman nodded gravely. "I've arranged for some to be sent over from our Manchester site. They

should be here by midday. You couldn't just work this morning in your 'hipstered' jeans, could you, lads? I checked the weather forecast and ultra-violet radiation levels are quite low today."

It started mid-morning with one soft wolf-whistle from behind a screen of shrubbery. But within minutes a large group of women had gathered. Some were a bit bleary-eyed – they had been up half the night sewing jeans, after all – but they were none the quieter for it. The air was filled with whoops and whistles of deafening magnitude:

"Nice behind, love!"

"Oy, sexy rump!"

"Lovely rear view, darlin'!"

It was blatant sexual harrassment of the first order. You'd never hear a builder shouting anything like that to a woman walking by.

Fred the foreman called the police but the Sisters were long gone by the time they arrived. The jeans from Manchester didn't turn up until 2.45pm. The delivery driver had been held up on the way by a crack team of Sisters of Hipsters, who had stitched every pair of jeans in his van to their preferred pattern. The story was the same up and down the country. In some parts, Sisters of Hipsters even managed to infiltrate denim factories and modify jeans at source.

The British Government set up Action 2010, employing the same people they had had working for Action 2000, the organization which co-ordinated efforts to keep Britain's computer systems protected from the potential threat of the Millennium Bug.

Eventually they came up with 'UV Radiation-Resistant Barely-There Builders' Rear Revealers', which allowed women to ogle builders' bums to their hearts' content while lending protection to the builders themselves against the increasing risk of skin cancer faced by the fairer-skinned people of world as a result of the erosion of the ozone layer.



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■ Written and simultaneous translation from English into Bulgarian and Bulgarian into English. Anelia Vassileva Tel./fax: 359 2 9805532; 9805920 e-mail: nelly_vas@yahoo.com

EXCHANGES

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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■ Internship/volunteer wanted for the Women's Alliance for Development office in Sofia. Interesting work on different projects including Fair play magazine. wad@infotel.bg

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■ SEAL YOU HOME FOR PEACE You can order peace seals "My home is a place of Peace, or "My school is a place of Peace" from the Women's World Summit Foundation, POBox 2001, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland Email wwsf@iprolink.ch Fax (..41 22) 738.82.48.

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VISIT the KARAT Coalition website!

<http://www.karat.org>



For information about the activities of the KARAT Coalition and its members, the Beijing+5 process, links to women's organisations and many other resources relating to women's issues in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Articles and Art contributions are **WELCOME**



If you would like to participate in the voice of the **Fair Play** magazine, please send your articles, art, or information to us. **Fair Play** is published **four times a year**.

The mission of Fair Play quarterly is to provide a forum for women in the CEE/CIS countries to exchange ideas and best practices to improve social, economic, political, and legal conditions for women, their children, their families and their countries. Its mission is also to be a voice that carries and interprets grass-roots women's concerns to national and international policy and decision-makers.

What kind of material are we looking for?

- Interesting, readable, personal articles with compelling headlines and sub-headings which
- dramatize and describe the plight of women living under certain conditions and show how conditions, cultures, laws, and financial situations can affect negatively women's life and the life of her family.
- dramatize and describe how women have overcome certain negative conditions by working individually, in groups, with decision-makers, through NGOs, and benefiting from support from funders, or from changes in laws or policies.
- Present analytical views of a given topic - analyses of situations, tendencies, trends, policies, and possible solutions to concerns that affect women, their families, and their countries.

Submissions should express the views and analyses of the author on situations, tendencies, and trends. The use of statistical data is encouraged to strengthen and add credibility to the position/analyses. Statistics are most beneficial when placed outside the article - in a sidebar, box, or table - separate from the article. We will not accept materials giving only statistical data, which can be found in source books or on the Internet. Also, to ensure that Fair Play is perceived as a professional magazine, please be sure to cite sources for all statistics and materials quoted. Materials giving the regional view are highly appreciated.

- Good examples/solved problems/practices.
- Articles written by young people - especially university students - on how they see their future.
- Up-to-date information about events, conference conclusions, workshops, etc. in your country

Please follow these format guidelines:

- The submission should be no more than 2,000 words;
- Written in English;

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- The author should submit a few sentences about her/himself;
- The author should supply a photo of herself;
- Form: interview, art., essay.

We strongly encourage writers to check the main objectives of the magazine, to ensure that their submission is suitable. Please contact us if you are not sure.

Articles will be edited and Fair Play will retain the copyright.

Artistic submissions should be either slides or photos. Color is preferred to black and white. Materials will be returned after the issue is published. The artist should also include a short biography and a photo of her/himself.

THEMES OF FUTURE ISSUES:

- HEALTH: women's health; reproductive rights; domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases
- VIOLENCE: domestic violence, sexual harassment; trafficking in women, armed conflicts, violation of women's human rights

You may also submit materials on other topics if you think there is a considerable interest in them.

Send all submissions:

**by e-mail: wad@infotel.bg or
by post: Women's Alliance for Development
52, Neofit Rilski Street
1000 Sofia, BULGARIA**

Benefits of Contributing to Fair Play

When you contribute to Fair Play you :

- feel the power of being able to contribute to the advancement of women in CEE/CIS countries,
- make sure your country's activities are presented to funders and other supporters abroad,
- ensure your country's activities are elaborated and clarified in a prestigious document suitable for reading by your Members of Parliament and others in a position to make changes in your country
- will receive two free copies of the magazine in which your contribution has appeared
- will receive one free classified add in the magazine

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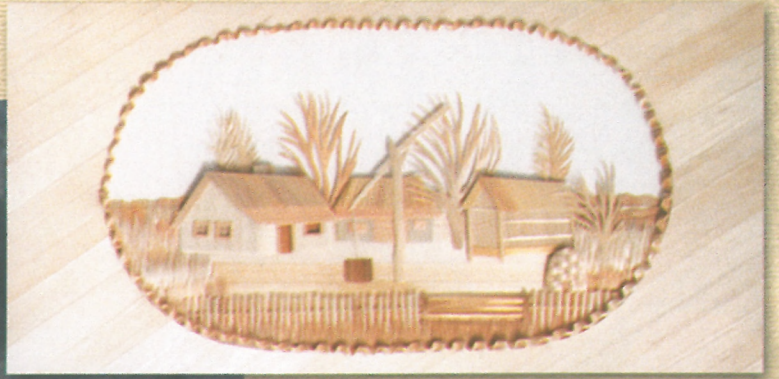
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The womenfolk of Subotica in north Yugoslavia started crafting straw sculptures in the 19th century to while away the time as they tended geese and cattle. At the beginning of the 20th century it became a harvest-time tradition to adorn participants in the thanksgiving procession with wheat ornaments.

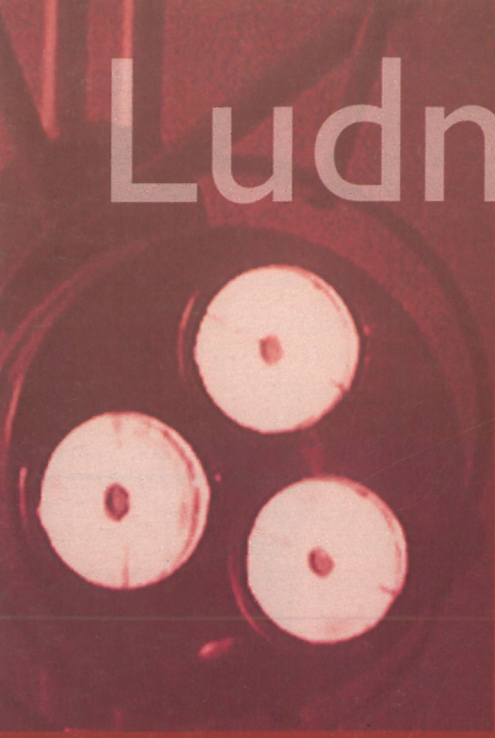
The straw crown was the ultimate object of honour, fashioned as a symbol of the successful completion of exhausting toil and gratitude to God/ The custom remains to this day.

Over time the tradition developed and imaginative craftswomen were creating little works of art. Anna Milodanovic, one of the best straw artists of her time, made the first straw painting in 1962. The first fine arts colony in the straw technique was organized in 1986 and this year the 15th was held.

The straw artists find inspiration for their paintings in their everyday life and surroundings but also in their dreams, hopes and aspirations. They achieve incredible nuances of light and shadow, matt and gloss, and a whole palette of natural colors ranging from cold silver, to coppery reddish to glimmering gold. Skilled hands create unique and phantasmagoric three-dimensional scenes of seemingly everyday themes and scenes; with their farms, landscapes, houses, friends, animals and baskets of flowers and fruits.

Majda Sikoček
art historian
Association of Businesswomen
Belgrade

Ludmila Belova



Belova Ludmila was born in 1960 in Kamchatka and lives and works in St.Petersburg, Russia.

She graduated from the Abramtzevo Art College in 1980 and has been a member of the Russian Artists' Union since 1991.

Among her exhibition credits are:

1994 - „Eurosculpture-94.“

International symposium, Carhaix, Britane, France.

1994 - „A Sign in the Landscape.“

„Worshop and exhibition, Litzén, Berlin, KulturBraueri, Germany.

1997 - „Frauen perspektiven.“ - Karlsruhe, Germany.

1998 - „Art sans fin.“ Grenchen, Switzerland.

1999 - „Timelink.“ The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

2000 - „Cucumbers. Photo observations.“

„Art Collegium Gallery, St.Petersburg.

2000 - Media Art Fest 2000, Central Exhibition Hall, St.Petersburg.

