

# **WIDER**

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**PRIVATIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION  
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND  
THE SOVIET UNION:  
THE GENDER DIMENSION**

EDITED BY  
**VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM**

WORLD INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS RESEARCH  
OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

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## PREFACE

The subject matter dealt with in this monograph explores the implications of privatization and democratization in the former centrally planned economies with its main focus on gender related issues. The papers presented here attempt to encapsulate the discussions and findings of a research conference that took place at WIDER in September 1991. The questions pursued in these discussions covered a range of issues affecting the socio-economic status of women as a result of the ongoing process of reform and restructuring in the former socialist countries. The transition from a centrally planned system to that of a market determined economy, admittedly, involves a painful adjustment process especially in the short and medium terms. Prior to the reform process, the centrally planned economies were notable for the relatively favourable position enjoyed by women in the matter of employment. Given the fact that the adjustment process is likely to result in substantial unemployment among the unskilled and semi-skilled of the working population, the danger is very much there that a larger proportion of the women in the labour force may be deprived of their earnings in the short run.

The papers in this monograph have critically reviewed the process of privatization and democratization in country specific situations and have highlighted the consequent plight of women and other vulnerable sections of the population. Four papers address the issue of 'women and employment' in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe respectively, while two other papers deal with the question of 'women and politics'.

Now that the restructuring process is well under way and is an irreversible fact, can the rigours of its impact be mitigated through remedial measures? Can the provision of a general safety net, to take care of the situation arising out of the transitional unemployment, adequately meet the problems faced by the more vulnerable sections of the labour force and particularly women? What would be the international resource transfer implications of such policies? Will the dismantling of the old quota system guaranteeing certain proportion of political representation to women lead to decline in female participation in the process of governance in countries like the former Soviet Union? The research reported here seeks to answer these and other related questions in terms of the national as well as global context.

The study of economic reform in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union constitutes the theme of a comprehensive WIDER sponsored project on the transformation of centrally planned economies. This project focussed on three main macro-economic subject areas, namely, stabilization; restructuring and liberalization of economic activity; and the resolution of external debt problems. By highlighting the social costs involved and its gender dimension, the findings reported here will complement the larger project and contribute to the ongoing debate on policies of economic liberalization and reform.

Lal Jayawardena  
Director

# PRIVATIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION: THE GENDER DIMENSION

**Introduction:** Valentine M. Moghadam

On 2-3 September 1991, UNU/WIDER hosted a research conference in Helsinki on the gender-specific effects of restructuring in the former socialist countries. A list of participants and paper titles will be found in the Appendix. All the papers prepared for the conference will be published in book form. The present monograph consists of excerpts from several of the papers, in order to disseminate more quickly the main findings of the research conference, to stimulate further research on the impact of economic and political changes on women's roles and status, and to prompt policy-makers to include the gender dimension in their new calculations.

It has long been known that societal transformation entails shifts in political power and property rights, resulting in changes in class structure and social hierarchies. Political sociology and the sociology of development have revealed the centrality of the state and class coalitions in processes of modernization, economic development, and political change, including revolutions.<sup>1</sup> What women-in-development (WID) research and feminist scholarship have contributed is the growing consensus that neither development analysis nor political studies can be divorced from gender categories and sex-specific observations.<sup>2</sup>

These developments in social theory and social science research prompted the present study of the impact on women of the wide-ranging economic and political changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It seemed clear that the transition from socialist forms of organization to market-directed ones, from central planning to the free market, from socialist ideology to liberal capitalist discourses, and from Communist hegemony to political democratization would have specific effects upon various social groups: certainly labour would be most immediately and profoundly affected. It seemed to me equally obvious that these changes would also have gender-specific consequences, inasmuch as socio-cultural arrangements give men and women different roles in production and reproduction. Given the high rate of female

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<sup>1</sup> See Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985.)

<sup>2</sup> See Amartya Sen, "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts", pp. 123-149 in Irene Tinker (ed.), *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

labour force participation in the state socialist system, due to the socialist policy of full employment, I hypothesized that privatization and restructuring would lead to high rates of female unemployment. I also hypothesized that the immediate outcome of democratization -- involving in part the elimination of quotas which increased women's political participation under socialism -- would diminish rather than enhance women's presence in political organizations.<sup>3</sup>

In most of the state socialist countries, and particularly in earlier years, The Woman Question had figured prominently in discourses, and the full participation of women in the socialist economy and public life was considered both a right (i.e., integral to women's emancipation) and an obligation (i.e., necessary for the full mobilization of the citizenry toward economic development). As a region, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had higher rates of female labour force participation and higher female shares of the full-time labour force than any other region in the world. In the Soviet Union, more women were involved in non-traditional occupations (such as engineering and road construction) than anywhere else, and this was, at one time, widely admired by Western and Third World feminists.

Perestroika and the political revolutions of 1989 have been followed by concerted efforts to transform economic structures, political institutions, laws, and even values and attitudes. New discourses are taking shape in explicit opposition to the previous dominant discourse of socialism, Marxism, and communism, borrowing heavily from neoclassical economics and from liberal and conservative political thought. The socialist discourse of common ownership, workers' management, and equality is no longer present. Concepts of efficiency, rationality, and productivity

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<sup>3</sup> Although some may insist on the uniqueness of each change process, comparative research in the social sciences indicates that there are trends and patterns common to social movements, revolutions, elite formations, and economic restructuring. The Third World experience with structural adjustment, and the legal, political, and economic changes instituted after the Iranian Revolution led me to formulate the hypotheses on the likely impact of *perestroika* and the "1989 revolutions" on gender relations and on women's roles. For an elaboration of the outcomes of the Iranian Revolution, see my article "Islamic Populism, Class and Gender in Post-Revolutionary Iran", forthcoming in John F. Foran (ed.), *Social Movements in Iran: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*. Other authors have analyzed the problems and prospects of democratization in the former state socialist societies in light of the experiences in Latin America. See for example Adam Przeworski, "Political Dynamics of Economic Reforms: East and South", pp. 21-74 in György Szoboszlai (ed.), *Democracy and Political Transformation: Theories and East-Central European Realities* (Budapest: Hungarian Political Science Association, 1991).

have replaced concepts of equality, social need, and full employment. In the Soviet Union, women's labour force attachment is increasingly blamed for a host of social ills, including juvenile delinquency, infant mortality, excessive abortion, and high divorce rates. In Eastern Europe, economic and political changes militate against not only the full employment of women, but also state provisions, benefits and social policies which allowed women to combine motherhood and employment. In such a context, what may occur is a reduction in the demand for female labour -- which, unlike developing countries, has been "expensive labour" rather than "cheap labour". If this were to continue unabated, women would increasingly come to be seen in terms of their motherhood roles rather than as citizens and workers.

The group of experts who convened at Helsinki had been asked to address the following questions:

How are women faring in the formal labour market? What changes have occurred or are likely to occur in participation rates, sectoral distribution, income, and benefits? What has happened to the women employees of firms which have been privatized?

What changes are occurring in the field of education? What changes have emerged in the curriculum? How might the shift from secular to religious schooling (for example, in Poland) affect gender role socialization?

What is the state of reproductive rights? What control do women have over their own fertility? What is the availability of sex education, contraception, abortion, medical care for mothers and infants? What are the restrictions? How are women, or feminists, responding to these developments?

What has happened to the social policies designed for women? What is the situation with childcare facilities? Family allowances? Maternity and childcare leave?

How are women involved in formal politics? What are the voting patterns? Representation in parliament? Membership and leadership in political organizations and parties? How vocal and visible are the women? Does The Woman Question enter into political discourses? What other patterns of political activity on the part of women exist? Social movements? Feminist groups?

In public discourses and cultural expression, what images of women and their "place" are prevalent, and how far do these reflect or determine the reality? What are women doing in the cultural field?

As will be seen in the pages which follow, the papers confirmed the hypothesis that privatization would have especially adverse effects on women, at least in the short run. In all countries but Hungary, women outnumber men among the newly unemployed. The closing down or privatization of factories is especially hard on single mothers, who relied on them not only for income but for childcare facilities. Strategic interventions at all levels will thus be necessary to offset the adverse effects of economic restructuring, and to ensure that women are not the principal losers in the shift from socialist planning to the free market. Nor has democratization been a panacea; in all the countries under investigation, Western-style elections have resulted in a diminished role for women in formal politics. Quotas are at present very unpopular in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as they are associated with Communist rule. However, many social-democratic parties in Western Europe reserve a percentage of seats or nominations for women, in recognition that such proactive measures are necessary to attain gender equality.

The bitter pill of rapid transition to a market economy is proving to be harder to swallow than was envisaged by the Western economists who prescribed this remedy for socialist stagnation. What is occurring in Eastern Europe, and especially in the Soviet Union, is an historically unprecedented experiment whose economic and political outcomes are uncertain.<sup>4</sup> In the short-term, however, unemployment will abound, deskilling and retraining may ensue, and the emerging labour markets will not be particularly woman-friendly. If the outcome of the present transition is to be truly democratic, then it will have to be conscious of the gender and class components of politics. If the goal is not to create "male democracies" or "elite democracies" but truly social democracies, then women and working people must be full participants in shaping the emerging political structures, and their interests must be reflected in the social policies and the macroeconomic policies to come.

At the same time, what is needed is more research, more data, and a monitoring of both the social consequences of privatization and the changes in the occupational structure and stratification system. This is an appropriate task for the international organizations that form the United Nations system:

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<sup>4</sup> As Adam Przeworski (op.cit.) put it, "reforms are a plunge into the unknown" (p. 64). However, he does suggest two likely outcomes: (a) political developments in Eastern Europe will be similar to those of Latin America and (b) economic transformations will stop far short of their current blueprints. "Thus economic reforms are likely to limp under democratic conditions while democratic institutions continue to experience the pressure arising from economic suffering" (p. 64).

those focussing on research, such as UNU, WIDER, and UNESCO, those focussing on technical assistance, such as ILO, as well as those providing financing, such as the World Bank.

This monograph begins with a global perspective on gender and restructuring. Part II examines women's employment situation, and Part III focuses on women's political participation. Because Part III includes only two papers, the excerpts are lengthier.

## Part I. Gender and Restructuring: A Global Perspective

*From "Gender and Restructuring: A Comparative Analysis of Third World Industrializing Countries and the Former State Socialist Societies (A Modified World-System Perspective)", by Valentine M. Moghadam.*

Restructuring is the most recent development in the post-World War II process of what has been variously called the internationalization of capital, the new, or changing, international division of labour, global Fordism, and the golden age of capitalism. Growth, employment, and foreign productive investment were elements of this golden age and of internationalization. In this regard the transnational corporations (TNCs) were significant, as were national development plans and industrialization projects. What internationalization entailed was the increased integration, rationalization, coordination and interdependence of the world-system at the level of the political economy and inter-state relations. Plant relocations from North to South in search of cheap labour and production costs, the spreading importance of decentralized production sites in both North and South, and the control and coordination by TNCs of these decentralized production units were salient features of internationalization.

In the world-system perspective, global restructuring refers to the emergence of the global assembly line in which research and management are controlled by the core or developed countries while assembly line work is relegated to semi-periphery or periphery countries that occupy less privileged positions in the global economy. Restructuring paradoxically concentrates control over increasingly dispersed production sites and decentralized organizations through sub-contracting and product differentiation. As Kathryn Ward explains, "The global assembly line approach to production is attractive to transnational corporations (TNCs) and to employers seeking greater access to markets, diffusion of political and economic costs, improved competitive abilities, and product diversity. Within developing countries, restructuring is marked by growth of the service sector and specialization in export industries such as electronics, garments, and pharmaceuticals as a development strategy. Restructuring is also marked by increasing use of female industrial workers in the informal sector." In the advanced capitalist countries this process has taken the form of industrial restructuring and a shift from manufacturing to services.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kathryn Ward (ed.), *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1990), pp. 1-2; Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison,

The centre-piece of global restructuring is the growth in the number of informal sector workers and women workers. In contrast to the formal sector, the pay and working conditions in the informal sector are unregulated by labour legislation. The existence of this sector is functional for capital inasmuch as it provides an alternative, and cheap, source of labour. By subcontracting industrial production to informal factories or home-based workers, employers can minimize competitive risks, wages, and the threat of unionization, while maximizing their flexibility in hiring, their overhead costs, and their production processes. In the United States, the growth of informalization has paralleled the increasing use of immigrant labour, drawing especially large numbers of Hispanic women into formal and informal arrangements in the garment and electronics industries of New York and California. Temporality, comparatively lower wages, and reduced membership in unions or other workers' organizations are additional characteristics of women's employment.<sup>6</sup>

Economic internationalization has led to what Susan Joekes calls the globalization of female labour, and Guy Standing the feminization of labour. An important feature has been the relocation of labour-intensive industries from industrially developed to developing countries in search of cheap labour, mostly young, unmarried, and inexperienced women to engage in industrial work. Textiles and clothing were the first industries relocated, followed by food processing, electronics, and in some cases pharmaceutical products. In this process, various forms of subcontracting arrangements were made to relocate production, or subsidiaries set up with foreign or partly local capital. This TNC relocation has affected women mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Southeast Asia. The most important areas of activity for foreign investors in the export manufacturing sector in developing countries has been the textiles and clothing and electronics industries. Five countries dominate in terms of the size of their export-processing zone (EPZ) operations: Hong Kong, South Korea, Puerto Rico, Singapore and Taiwan. Rather less important but still substantial are EPZs in Brazil, Haiti, Malaysia and Mexico. Over the years a majority of jobs created in the export

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*The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> See Alejandro Portes and Saskia Sassen-Koob, "Making It Underground: Comparative Material on the Informal Sector in Western Market Economies", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 93, no. 1, (1987), pp. 30-61; U.S. Department of Labor, *Handbook on Women Workers*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Secretary, Women's Bureau (1991).

manufacturing sector has gone to women. Indeed, Joekes and Moayedı note "the disproportionate access that women have to export manufacturing employment and their overwhelming importance as suppliers for the export manufacturing sector." Joekes concludes that industrialization in the Third World has been as much female-led as export-led. This is especially so in the newly-industrializing countries of Southeast Asia, or what are now called the Dynamic Asian Economies.<sup>7</sup>

Increased trade, multinational investment, and cross-regional flows of capital and labour have increasingly drawn women into the process of economic internationalization and restructuring. This has had the dual effect of undermining notions of the exclusively domestic role of women *and* of utilizing them as cheap and flexible labour.

Since the 1970s, and especially during the 1980s, global restructuring has been characterized by the shift from import-substitution industrialization to export-led growth, from state ownership to privatization, from government regulation of prices and trade to liberalization, from a stable and organized labour force to "flexible" workforce, from formal employment to the proliferation of informal sectors. This process is likely to continue through the 1990s. During the 1980s, the worldwide economic crisis, and the requirements of structural adjustment programmes, contributed to these shifts in developing countries. In the United States and Britain, international competition and declining profits in manufacturing led to a more combative stance on the part of capital, breaking the social pact with labour. In Britain, "flexible workers" increased by 16 percent to 8.1 million between 1981 and 1985 while permanent jobs decreased by 6 percent to 15.6 million. Over roughly the same period, nearly one third of the ten million new jobs created in the U.S. were thought to be in the "temporary" category. Now, "flexibility" is the *sine qua non* of international economics. Some celebrate "flexible specialization" as an advance for women, at least in the case of Tokyo. I am inclined to agree with David Harvey's assessment that "Not only do the new labour market structures make it much easier to exploit the labour power of women on a part-time basis, and so to substitute lower-paid

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<sup>7</sup> Susan Joekes, *Women in the World Economy: An INSTRAW Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Guy Standing, "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labour", Working Paper No. 31, Labour Market Analysis and Employment Planning, WEP (Geneva: ILO, 1989); ILO/INSTRAW, *Women in Economic Activity: A Global Statistical Survey 1950-2000* (Geneva: International Labour Office and Santo Domingo: UN Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1985); Susan Joekes and Roxanna Moayedı, "Women and Export Manufacturing: A Review of the Issues and AID Policy", (Washington, DC: ICRW, July 1987).

female labour for that of more highly paid and less laid-off core male workers, but the revival of sub-contracting and domestic and family labour systems permits a resurgence of patriarchal practices and homeworking".<sup>8</sup>

And now restructuring has encompassed the former state socialist countries as well. This will surely affect the position of women in production and reproduction. But before examining the gender dynamics of restructuring in the two semi-peripheries, let us address the question of why these changes should have occurred at all in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

### *Explaining Restructuring*

The basic premise of world-system theory is that there exists a capitalist world-economy which has integrated a geographically vast set of production processes. The economic organization of the world system consists of a single, worldwide division of labour that unifies the multiple cultural systems of the world's people into a single, integrated economic system. The economic zones of the world-system are the core (OECD countries), periphery (underdeveloped countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia), and semi-periphery (semi-industrial countries: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, South Korea, Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa, etc.) The political framework within which this division of labour has grown up has been that of an interstate system. The driving force of this world-system is global accumulation. The capitalist world-economy functions by means of a pattern of cyclical rhythms, a seemingly regular process of expansion and contraction of the world-economy as a whole. Sometimes called "long waves" and sometimes Kondratieff cycles (after the man who first used the term in 1926), these are extended periods (about 40-60 years) of economic expansion and stagnation occurring over the history of the world capitalist system at least since the industrial revolution. As Wallerstein explains it, over 400 years, successive expansions have transformed the capitalist world-economy from a system located primarily in Europe to one that covers the entire globe. Chase-Dunn, another world-system theorist, has also argued that the simultaneity and broad similarities between Reagan/Thatcher deregulation and attack on the welfare state, austerity socialism in much of Europe, and marketization in the former socialist states "are all related to the B-phase downturn of the Kondratieff wave", as are the policies of austerity and privatization in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile. He states:

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<sup>8</sup> Harvey, *op.cit.*, p. 153. For a favourable view, see Kunniko Fujita, "Women Workers and Flexible Specialization: The Case of Tokyo", *Economy and Society*, vol. 20, no. 3 (August 1991), pp. 260-282.

"The way in which the pressures of a stagnating world economy impact upon national policies certainly varies from country to country, but the ability of any single national society to construct collective rationality is limited by its interaction within the larger system".<sup>9</sup>

It follows from this perspective that the state socialist societies did not constitute a separate socio-economic system with its own dynamic, but were rather "an interactive part of the larger capitalist world-economy, albeit with some internal socialist features". The strength of world capitalism, especially as it operates in the interstate system, pushed these states in the direction of reintegration. Writing in the early 1980s, Chase-Dunn explained that the crisis of the capitalist world-economy is transmitted to the national economy of the state socialist countries in a number of ways:

To the extent that they purchase anything on the world market, changes in world market prices will affect their internal pricing. In the present period of "stagflation", the economies of the Eastern European countries have experienced inflation of somewhat smaller amplitude after a time lag following the inflation of prices in the larger world-economy. ... To the extent to which these national economies produce commodities for profit on the world market, their internal pricing systems will tend to reflect the most "economic" distribution for rewarding and encouraging profitable production, just as "prices" within a capitalist firm come to reflect larger market prices. ...

Extensive borrowing from the West [by Poland] was used to develop industrial production for export on the bet that world demand would be sufficient and Western markets would remain open to Polish export. The downturn of the long wave (Kondratieff wave) spoiled this Poland plan and contributed to the disappointment of rising expectations for material improvement among Polish workers. This, combined with old grievances

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<sup>9</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn, "Marxism and the Global Political Economy", Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, Washington, DC (August 1990); Immanuel Wallerstein, "Crisis as Transition", pp. 11-54 in Samir Amin *et al.*, *Dynamics of Global Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982); I. Wallerstein, "Long Waves as Capitalist Process", *Review* 4 (1984), pp. 559-576.

against the regime and anti-Soviet nationalism, led to the growth of ... Solidarity...

Even when socialist states do not engage in commodity production for the world market, their national economies are affected by the larger world contraction... [A consequence of the downturn is that] individual core nations become more aggressive and begin increasing their armaments. In response, the socialist nations must increase military expenditures...

In a more recent paper, Chase-Dunn has argued that "the history and developmental trajectory of the socialist states can be explained as socialist movements in the semi-periphery which attempted to transform the basic logic of capitalism, but which ended up using socialist ideology to mobilize industrialization in order to try to catch up with core capitalism."<sup>10</sup>

In their explanation of the political revolts and economic restructuring in Eastern Europe, Boswell and Peters note that the growing and innovative economic sector in the core has been changing from low skill mass assembly run by military-type bureaucracies to more flexible, high skill batch production with decentralized control. This ongoing "industrial divide" in the world economy, they explain, is forcing all developed countries to either match the innovations in accumulation or to fall into the periphery and be satisfied with the low technology cast off by the core. Boswell and Peters place the concept of industrial divides in the more general theory of economic long waves. Economic divides are the critical turning points during the transition from stagnation to expansion when firms, industries and states must develop extensive socio-political accumulation innovations to foster renewed economic growth and development. "Those that fail to adopt the accumulation innovations are left stagnating and eventually reduced to dependence on the innovators." This "long wave approach" explains why a Stalinist bureaucratic organization of mass production was successful at industrial development in the past and why "it is now being deconstructed".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn, "Introduction", pp. 9-18 in C. Chase-Dunn (ed.), *Socialist States in the World-System* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982); C. Chase-Dunn, "Socialist States in the Capitalist World-Economy", pp. 21-55 in C. Chase-Dunn (ed.), *op.cit.*; C. Chase-Dunn, "The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism", forthcoming in Louis F. Kriesberg (ed.), *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, vol. 14 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Terry Boswell and Ralph Peters, "Rebellions in Poland and China", *Critical Sociology*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 3-34.

## *Gender and Restructuring in the Third World*

In the 1980s, restructuring took the form of stabilization, liberalization and privatization, partly to service the enormous debt accrued by deficit-financing states and partly to adhere to World Bank and IMF conditionality for further loans, such as the Structural Adjustment Loans or Sectoral Adjustment Loans. There is consensus that adjustment and stabilization policies, or structural adjustment, have had an intensely adverse effect upon the livelihoods and standards of living of masses of people throughout the Third World, as a famous UNICEF study documented. In a recent study focusing on the impact of the economic crisis and adjustment process on the living standards of the Mexican population between 1982 and 1985 concludes that Mexico was left with a relatively impoverished middle class and rising poverty. A study of Turkey's recovery from its debt crisis shows that although economic liberalization and structural adjustment resulted in a remarkable growth in exports, income distribution deteriorated. A WIDER study of IMF- and World Bank-directed stabilization experiences in eighteen developing countries concludes that "programmes of the Fund/Bank type are optimal for neither stabilization nor growth and income redistribution in the Third World".<sup>12</sup> Even the World Bank Development Report for 1990 conceded that poverty had increased during what some have called the "lost development decade" -- the result of austerity measures to tackle debts and deficits. According to the United Nations *1989 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, the latter half of the 1980s was characterized by "uneven economic growth that has often aggravated the differences between regions." The report elaborates:

In the older industrialized States, a period of steady economic growth and slowing population growth, often accompanied by lower energy and food costs has meant an unprecedented increase in material production. In some countries in Asia there has been

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<sup>12</sup> Lance Taylor, *Varieties of Stabilization Experience* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 3; UNICEF [G. Cornia, R. Jolly, and F. Stewart], *Adjustment with a Human Face* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Commonwealth Secretariat [Mary Chinery Hesse, *et al.*], *Engendering Adjustment for the 1990s* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1989); Nora Lustig, "Economic Crisis, Adjustment and Living Standards in Mexico, 1982-1985", *World Development*, vol. 18, no. 10 (October 1990), pp. 1325-1342; Tosun Aricanli and Dani Rodrik, "An Overview of Turkey's Experience with Economic Liberalization and Structural Adjustment", *World Development*, vol. 18, no. 10 (October 1990), pp. 1343-1350.

steady growth through trade and manufacturing that has led to rising levels of prosperity. However, in most developing regions, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, economic stagnation or negative growth, continued population increase and the prolonged international debt crisis and adjustment policies designed to deal with this have shaped and constrained the activities of women as individuals, as carers and providers for families and households, and as participants in the practical development of their countries. The problems of recession and economic restructuring in the face of external debt have led Governments to focus on these, often to the neglect of longer term issues that have direct bearing on the advancement of women. At the same time, pre-existing conditions of inequality -- in health and nutrition, levels of literacy and training, in access to education and economic opportunity, and in participation in decision-making at all levels -- between women and men have sometimes been exacerbated both by the crises themselves and by the policies adopted to cope with them.

Thus one cannot escape the conclusion that although economic internationalization has drawn more and more women into production and public life, structural adjustment has worked to the disadvantage of women. Working women have lost jobs or seen their incomes fall. The quality of public services has deteriorated. In developing countries, poor women have had to assume more responsibilities for their households, and devise all manner of survival strategies. In industrial countries, recession and restructuring -- with the concomitant increases in unemployment -- has rendered many women's economic position precarious. Now that there is greater competition for employment, their situation is even more precarious. We can expect this to be especially salient in the case of the East European countries undergoing economic reform. If the costs of providing the social benefits for women workers once borne by the state or socialist enterprise are now to be assumed by employers, this will likely have the effect of reducing the demand for female labour and reducing women's earnings in the formal sector.

### *Restructuring and Gender in Eastern Europe and the USSR*

Restructuring in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union encompasses more than stabilization, adjustment, and privatization. The scope of restructuring even exceeds the entire economy, as it entails political, juridical, and ideological changes. The task is even more daunting in the Soviet Union. The future of restructuring of

the former centrally planned economies is unclear, in part because considerable uncertainty exists as to the amount of saving that will emerge under the new economic conditions. There is also uncertainty about the role and extent of foreign saving and foreign investment. In the words of the authors of a recent WIDER study, "despite the attractive low labour costs in Eastern Europe, foreign firms are likely to want to keep their options open and wait until the political and economic uncertainty has been reduced".<sup>13</sup> In Poland, notwithstanding the application of "shock therapy" urged by Western orthodox economists, Poland has attracted very little investment capital. Private shops are booming, but output and growth continue to fall. Economic reorganization requires not only capital but also labour mobility, of the kind characteristic of Third World industrializing countries and the United States. This has wide-ranging social implications. For example, Blanchard et al. point out that in the former socialist countries, labour mobility depends in part on a housing market "that provides the correct incentives for workers to move and for housing to be built where most needed." The current structure of the housing market, with its largely state-owned apartments, subsidized rents, and nonprice allocation, makes it difficult if not impossible for workers to move. It also does not provide the right incentives for housing investment. Marketization, therefore, will include ending all manner of subsidies and controls -- as has occurred in Poland. For these and other reasons, Blanchard and associates conclude that "the process of adjustment that would emerge from the unfettered market process would likely involve too little job creation, too much job destruction, and too high a level of unemployment."

Unemployment is indeed the spectre that is haunting Eastern Europe. Experts expect one-fifth of the active population in Poland and Bulgaria to be jobless by the end of 1992, with figures of 13-14 percent for Hungary and 12 percent for Romania and Czechoslovakia. According to official figures, there were 2.1 million Poles, or 11 percent of the population, out of work by the end of 1991, along with 523,000 Czechoslovaks (6.6 percent), 500,000 Bulgarians (10 percent), 400,000 Hungarians (8.3 percent), and 300,000 Romanians (4.4 percent). The reasons for this accelerating joblessness are: a constant fall in internal demand and real wages, the collapse of trade with the former Soviet Union, the closure of big state enterprises, and the sacking of thousands of civil servants. In Hungary, despite cautious and gradual privatization of the economy and the injection of foreign capital, unemployment has increased fivefold in a year, going from 80,000 to 400,000. In all of Eastern Europe, young people are among the

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<sup>13</sup> Olivier Blanchard, Riduger Dornbusch, Paul Krugman, Richard Layard, Lawrence Summers, *Reform in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), p. xviii.

hardest hit, often at a time when they are seeking their first paid employment, as are women. In Poland, people aged 19-24 comprise 34.2 percent of the jobless, and among the jobless more than half are women. Income inequalities are growing, with, perhaps the sharpest differences along class, gender, and generational lines. As Lance Taylor explains, the process of restructuring, as defined by the conventional adjustment wisdom of the Bretton Woods institutions, widens an imbalance between aggregate supply and aggregate demand by plunging adjusting economies into unnecessary recession in the attempt to eliminate excess aggregate demand. This puts vulnerable social groups in the labour market, including women, at risk.

According to a recent ILO study of restructuring in the Soviet Union, in 1991 "the extent of poverty is alarming". Some estimates suggest that 80 million people, or more than a quarter of the entire population, have fallen into a state of bare subsistence, living on less than the official poverty level of 80 roubles per month. "National income fell by between 2 percent and 7 percent in 1990, the country's trade deficit trebled, even though the volume of trade actually declined, and an inflation rate of over 30 percent has threatened to drift upwards to levels usually characterized as hyperinflation, leaving those on fixed incomes in dire circumstances ... Meanwhile, open unemployment has become an increasingly serious phenomenon, in circumstances in which the means of social protection are scarcely effective".<sup>14</sup> In the Soviet Union, the restructuring of agriculture to achieve more effective labour mobility coincides with the radical redirection of social and labour policy, which includes more flexible wage determination processes, the abandonment of guaranteed employment, and the recognition of unemployment as a "regrettable reality". Indeed, according to Standing, "unemployment has already become a particularly severe prospect for women workers and for ethnic minorities in the various parts of the country".

The gender dimension of restructuring in the former socialist countries lies most obviously in the changes to women's status as workers. In a region of the world which once enjoyed the distinction of the highest rates of female labour force participation, and -- most significantly -- the largest female share of paid employment, women now face unemployment, marginalization from the productive process, loss of previous benefits and forms of social security. In Poland, husbands' wages are being raised in order to compensate for women's unemployment. According to Malgorzata Tarasiewicz, formerly head of Solidarity's Women Division in Poland, women's situation is likely to worsen with the

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<sup>14</sup> Guy Standing (ed.), *The New Soviet Labour Market: In Search of Flexibility* (Geneva: ILO, 1991), p. 1.

restructuring of those branches of industry, such as textiles, that employ mainly women. She is quoted as saying: "At the moment, employment in some textile industries is kept stable, but in order to avoid mass reductions, women are sent on unpaid leaves or work only two days a week earning [a wage] that is far below the poverty line." In the former German Democratic Republic, women's employment was facilitated by State provision of childcare and maternity leave, and by a policy of positive discrimination. This made it possible for women to combine their roles in production and reproduction (family life) with more ease than, say, working women in the United States or in most developing countries. Prior to unification and restructuring, more than 90 percent of GDR women had a secure job; 92 percent had had at least one child by the time she turned twenty-three. Now, female employees are let go before male employees are; in the unprofitable companies, childcare is the first benefit to be cut. According to one source, "Many mothers have no choice but to accept termination and stay at home."

If the costs of providing the social benefits for women workers once borne by the state or the socialist enterprise are now to be assumed by private employers, this will have the effect of reducing the demand for female labour, limiting women's access to full-time employment, and reducing their earnings in the formal sector. Why? From a market point of view, female labour in Eastern Europe is more expensive than male labour because of the costs involved in maternity and childcare provisions. This economic calculation, coupled with gender bias, may explain why so many women workers are losing jobs or not being hired in the present transition. Withdrawal of state support for working mothers in the former socialist countries is likely to diminish the identification of women as both workers and reproducers and replace it with an exclusive ideology of reproduction. In this way, not only are women among the principal losers in the short-term, but the longer-term impact may be a strengthening of patriarchal concepts concerning men's and women's roles.

Standing notes that a necessary structural change in the Soviet Union that will put considerable strain on the labour market is the transfer of labour out of agriculture and into the tertiary sector. At present, one in every five of the Soviet Union's workforce is apparently occupied in farming, compared with one in 15 in a country such as France. This could have profound gender implications -- studies have shown that in China, the retreat from collective farming to the family farm has resulted in a resurgence of patriarchy in the countryside and a diminished status for women,

according to a number of studies.<sup>15</sup> In the former Soviet Union, an end to collective farming with salaries for women agricultural workers, and a return to family production may result in new gender inequalities, especially in the less developed republics.

It is in this context of growing unemployment, higher prices, and falling investment, growth and output in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that the non-orthodox case for restructuring is gaining credibility among economists. Blanchard and associates (1991) conclude that governments must play an active role to minimize the social costs of adjustment. Standing (1991) makes a case for "social adjustments", echoing the concerns of Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart (UNICEF 1987) regarding the unacceptable social costs of structural adjustment in developing countries. Structuralist economists, notably Lance Taylor, make a strong case for state interventions during restructuring, in part to boost growth and output, in part to guarantee social needs. The argument of this paper is that intervention is also required to reduce the adverse effects of restructuring on women.

In both newly-industrializing countries of the Third World and the newly-privatizing countries of Eastern Europe, efficiency, productivity, and flexibility are key concepts in restructuring. In both regions this is to be accomplished through price reform, devalued currencies, foreign investments, and export promotion: i.e., integration into the world market. But whereas in the NICs integration into the world market has meant increased employment opportunities for women (because it coincided with accelerated industrialization and growth), in the latter integration is being translated into redundancy for women workers, at least in the short run. This is a key difference in the two cases. In both cases, however, restructuring means a deterioration of conditions of employment. Moreover, restructuring is everywhere leading to the growth of the informal sector. In the wake of structural adjustment, women in developing countries have been devising strategies of survival that are casual and informal in nature, such as the expansion of small enterprises. In developing countries, the lifespan of small enterprises may be short, and while they last they entail long working hours with minimal returns. In Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, a possible outcome of restructuring may very well be the expansion of an informal labour market and informal services sector -- especially if governments are unwilling or unable to provide credits and tax breaks for small businesses, and of

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<sup>15</sup> Dalia Davin, "The New Inheritance Law and the Peasant Household", *The Journal of Communist Studies*, vol. 3 (December 1987); Govind Kelkar, " ... Two Steps Back? New Agricultural Policies in Rural China and The Woman Question", pp. 120-150 in Bina Agarwal (ed.), *Structures of Patriarchy* (London: Zed, 1988). See also David Harvey, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

course in the context of employment contraction rather than employment generation. This will not necessarily be to women's advantage.

Turning from production to the material and symbolic aspects of reproduction, another important difference suggests itself. An essential difference between the two regions being compared -- and of course also between the advanced capitalist countries and the former socialist countries -- is that at a time when the cult of domesticity and the ideology of family attachment of women is on the decline -- the result of the massive economic incorporation of women, but also, especially in Western countries, the result of the feminist revolution -- the ideology of domesticity appears to be growing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In the newly-privatizing countries, this (re)turn to domesticity may serve the function of legitimating economic reorganization and unemployment. The emergence of the discourse of domesticity and family attachment of women after years of female employment and public visibility also suggests the importance of a purposive feminist intervention -- along with economic integration and political-juridical changes. That is to say, whereas mass education and employment of women are the prerequisites of gender equity and women's empowerment, the advancement of women is crucially effected through a conscious women's movement and feminist activism. A related point is that the transformation of what has been called in the socialist tradition *The Woman Question* cannot come about solely through participation in the sphere of production -- it must be addressed in the sphere of social reproduction as well, as noted in an excellent paper by Zakharova, Posadskaya, and Rimashevskaya.

In the past, a productivist bias obfuscated the need to tackle gender relations at the point of reproduction. Socialist countries remained preoccupied with integrating women in production only (rather than also integrating men in social reproduction), and identified gender equality with a high rate of female labour force participation. Because of the lack of a proper resolution to problems and needs in the sphere of reproduction, and because of the lack of a feminist movement and discourse, a post-socialist backlash has become possible. Many men are encouraging women to return to domesticity, and many women seem to want to retreat to the domestic sphere. This is described as "the patriarchal approach to the woman question" by Zakharova, Posadskaya, and Rimashevskaya. Their own alternative is termed "the egalitarian",

or feminist, approach, which is premised upon the need to involve men in reproduction.<sup>16</sup>

### *Conclusions*

At a global level, and over time, the integration of women into economic and political life -- and feminist activism -- has radically altered definitions of gender, leading to a decline of the patriarchal ideology which associated women exclusively with family and reproduction. Throughout the world, women's involvement in higher education, formal employment, and political institutions is both a reflection and a continuation of this trend. (Women's role in culture and the arts also helps to shape the new images of women and of gender.) But the process of social change is uneven, and setbacks are inevitable. Setbacks to women's equity and empowerment have emerged during the global process of economic restructuring. In both the Third World and the former state socialist societies, restructuring has had dubious developmental consequences and adverse effects on women's roles and status.

I will end by summarizing the similarities and differences in restructuring between the two semi-peripheries. Similarities entail the following: (a) Austerity measures and the reduction of demand through stabilization programmes and debt servicing; (b) Creation or increase of poverty and social inequalities; This is exacerbated by the lack of an effective taxation system and a reduction of public spending; (c) Reduction of the public sector wage bill, in terms of both public sector employment and reduced expenditure in health and education; (d) Mobility of capital and labour migration; Growing unemployment of both men and women; (e) Decline of unions and the social power of labour; The formation of a "flexible" labour force; (f) Deterioration of household budgets, requiring economic activity of its members in the informal sector; (g) Growth of an informal sector (which is especially active in Hungary among the former socialist countries).

The major differences in terms of gender and restructuring between the two regions are as follows: (a) Integration of Third World (especially Southeast Asian) economies in the world-economy has led to increased levels of female employment, whereas integration of the former state socialist societies, which coincides with restructuring, will have the effect of reducing female employment. (b) Restructuring is a far more radical process in the

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<sup>16</sup> N. Zakharova, A. Posadskaya, and N. Rimachevskaya, "The Women's Question and Perestroika", *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLI, no. 19 (1989), pp. 22-23.

former socialist countries than in the Third World or in the advanced capitalist countries. The shock to the working population may be greater, although its impact on labour, including female labour, may be variable by sector. (c) The "public sector" in socialist countries is a far greater employer of labour than is the case in developing countries and will therefore have to "release" a far larger proportion of the total labour force during restructuring. (d) Whereas the United States is a destination for Hispanic labour (principally from Mexico and Central America), it is not clear that Western Europe will welcome migrant labour from Eastern Europe, especially as it still has its own "periphery" of Turkey, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Yugoslavia. (e) Whereas the NICs benefited from transnational investment, it is not clear that this will be forthcoming in sufficient volume for the newly-privatizing countries. (f) Rising unemployment in the former state socialist countries may intensify the discourse of domesticity and family attachment of women. In the absence of a strong feminist movement, women's economic status and social positions may decline.

The question we close with is: How will working women respond to these changes and prospects?

## Part II. Women and Employment

### Hungary

*From "Economic Reform and Women: A General Framework with Specific Reference to Hungary", by Gordon Weil.*

Although literature on economic reform has grown rapidly, it has devoted relatively little attention to the impact of reform on women. This paper hopes to fill that gap, at least in part, by providing an economic perspective for viewing the way economic reform affects women.

Gender relations, including the socially and culturally accepted rights and responsibilities between men and women, underlie the economic structures and transformations in Hungary (or any nation) in both the public and private spheres. Gender relations are a major determinant of the types of careers men and women typically choose, the division of labour within the household, and ultimately the way reform affects women.

In addition to gender relations, women's ability to earn secure incomes is determined both by economic conditions and economic policy. At the macroeconomic level, economic conditions influence the environment in which women seek and participate in work by determining, for instance, rates of inflation, unemployment and growth. Microeconomic conditions, or the jobs that women tend to hold and their wages, directly determine women's incomes. Economic reform, the economic policy that is central to this paper, includes stabilization policies which work mainly through macroeconomic channels, and ownership policies which operate at the microeconomic level. The impact of economic reform on women in the productive sphere is analyzed by studying the consequences of the interaction of gender relations, economic conditions and reform policies on women's earnings. Economic success not only contributes to women's financial independence, an important element of full social equality, but also influences women's social independence. As John Stuart Mill put it more than one hundred years ago: "the power of earning is essential to the dignity of women."

Any full accounting of the effects of economic reform on women must consider women's multiple roles in both spheres. In this sphere too gender relations combine with economic conditions (here the set of policies which support women's reproductive chores) to determine the impact of reform policies on women.

In the short run reform promises very few benefits for women, and potential opportunities only arise after some time. It is

important to use this time to strengthen women's voice in the public arena so that any potential benefits can be realized.

How do stabilization and price liberalization policies affect women in their productive activities? The primary impact of any stabilization programme is to reduce demand. Of course the hope is that the savings generated from reduced spending will be directed into productive investment so that in the long run consumption and income can rise again. Initially, however, stabilization leads to reduced production and rising levels of unemployment which directly affect women.

Some industries, however, will be affected more than others. Although it is not clear just which industries will contract and which will expand as market prices arise, we can make some informed guesses. According to Kornai the mining industry is currently making losses and is quite dependent on subsidies.<sup>17</sup> As subsidies are reduced we can expect to see this industry contract eliminating many jobs. Women are almost entirely excluded from that industry, and so will not feel these effects directly. Similarly the energy and heavy industrial sectors, e.g. metallurgy and chemicals, have received a good deal of government support in Hungary over the past decades as part of the Soviet model of development. As these industries shrink and begin to restructure, unemployment will rise. Mining, energy, and heavy industry are the high wage sectors of the economy, and not coincidentally also sectors with low levels of efficiency. Women, who have been little represented here (which is one reason for the wage gap), may be shielded from the restructuring of these industries.

Some industries will expand. These are most likely the industries that currently bear heavy levels of indirect taxes. Electric supply and engineering are two such industries; engineering is another almost exclusively male dominated sector. Women are unlikely to be able to take advantage of expansion in this sector any time soon. To do so they must be directed into science and engineering educational tracks, which has not happened yet.

Part of the stabilization package includes devaluations of the forint to stimulate export production, and restrain imports. Following currency devaluations, the tradeable goods sector (including exports and import-substitutes) expands relative to non-tradeables. The service sector is part of the non-tradeable sector, and is a major employer of women in Hungary today. Hence we can expect these women to be particularly hard hit by devaluations. On the other hand, attempts to shift trade from CMEA countries to

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<sup>17</sup> Janos Kornai, *The Road to A Free Economy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990).

the West may advantage women. Typically the products traded with CMEA countries are not ones in which Hungary holds a comparative advantage for trade with the West. A shift toward Western markets will require changes in production and investment. The products now imported from Hungary by OECD countries are mostly in the clothing and textiles sectors, and much less concentrated in machinery and electrical equipment than exports to CMEA countries. Since light industry is more female dominated than is heavy industry, this shift may advantage women.

Women in the service sector may be affected by the stabilization programme in another way. Much of the funding for this sector comes from the central budget, especially for health care, education, and social care. This sector's development then depends upon political decisions about the state budget. Since part of the stabilization programme's goal is to reduce central government spending, women in this sector are at risk. Reductions in government spending on social programmes like health and education will lead to reductions in women's employment. Furthermore, since women tend to work in the lower levels of these professions they have less security. It is more likely that teachers will be let go rather than school principals. The only good news here is that relative to other nations at the same level of development Hungary's service sector is much smaller. Hence over the longer term we might anticipate an expansion of this sector which at some point may benefit women.

In the past the second economy has provided a buffer through which living standards have been maintained when production in the state sector slows. As stabilization and restructuring generate unemployment and as reforms seek to liberalize the private sector, we can expect to find more and more work done in this sector. However, this is not a sector in which women traditionally have been very active. This is particularly true of those women living in towns (without substantial household plots to farm) and without capital equipment or skills. Additionally since women often have home, childcare, and even elderly care responsibilities, time constraints prevent them from being very active in the second economy. Thus women are not likely to be able to enjoy the counter-cyclical benefits that men enjoy from the second economy.

We can conclude that stabilization and price liberalization will have a complex and varying impact on women. In the short run, however, the major impacts will be negative; it is only over a longer time period as different sectors expand and contract under market prices that women may gain.

## *Economic Reform*

The major impact of economic reform on women's reproductive activities has come through stabilization policies. Spending cuts and the likely increase in inflation that follows price liberalization will make managing household consumption a much more difficult task. On the expenditure side reductions in subsidies will drive upward the prices of food, milk, water, mortgage rates and other consumer goods forcing women to spend more time looking for bargains, or to cut back on purchases. In addition if childcare allowances and family supplements do not increase at least as rapidly as inflation, mothers will find it more difficult to stay home with their young children. If expenditures on creches, kindergartens, and day schools are reduced it will become more difficult for women to juggle work and family responsibilities. Families with several young children would be particularly hard hit.<sup>18</sup>

The elderly could also be particularly vulnerable to expenditure cuts. Many older women depend on pensions which are already too small to keep them out of poverty. Cuts in government spending on pensions, or even increases below the rate of inflation, would further erode these women's already low standard of living. In short, the two most vulnerable groups in Hungary during this period of reform are the elderly and families with several young children. Given women's nurturing role of both the young and the old, these cuts will have a powerful, if indirect, effect on most women.

The housing shortage too will be made worse by expenditure cuts. Government spending in this area is already low. Further reductions will make it even more difficult to find and afford new housing. And a growing shortage of housing will reduce the mobility of labour which will be especially problematic in an environment where labour demands are changing. In the same vein, a reduction in government subsidies to mortgage rates will further increase the cost of living for most urban families.

The change in Hungary's tax structure further tightens the squeeze on household consumption. Replacing taxes on profits with a VAT tax and income tax will reduce taxes on investment and increase them on consumption. Although a reduction in consumption demand may help slow inflation, its main impact will be to reduce household disposable income, and in that way make the lives of housewives more difficult.

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<sup>18</sup> R. Andorka, "Economic Difficulties -- Economic Reform -- Social Effects and Preconditions", *Acta Oeconomica* 39 (1988), pp. 291-302.

There may be a brighter side to this. There is some hope that liberalized prices will spur an increase in the production of consumer goods and services and relieve shortages. Should this be the case some women will find their reproductive chores easier. Certainly spending less time queueing-up for goods, and finding more access to prepared foods, laundries etc. will make housewives' jobs easier. But it is unrealistic to think that this increased production will have a major impact on most women. As the economy becomes more market-oriented and income inequality increases, there will be a stratum of relatively well-off women who will enjoy these new services, but for the majority this is not a viable strategy. In countries (e.g. Sweden) where these services are widely available, women receive a substantial amount of government support.

Stabilization, leading to rising unemployment rates, will also make women's reproductive activities more difficult. With high unemployment women cannot easily reduce their productive activities as the income they bring home is crucial. Also men will be more eager to take on second jobs. For both reasons women will have less time or help at home.

Economic reforms will surely make the reproductive aspects of women's lives more difficult in the short run. For a few well-off women life will become easier from an increased provision of consumer goods and possibly an expanded market for domestic help. For the majority of women, however, these are not real possibilities.

In the productive sphere the major negative impact Hungarian women will experience in the short run is rising levels of unemployment. It is no secret that in depressed economic times women generally fare worse than men in the market place. Also since sources of growth must come more and more from productivity increases, rather than from additional resources, demands for skilled relative to unskilled or semi-skilled labour will rise. Compared to men, women have a disadvantage in this area. Hungary's strategy of opening up to foreign investment holds mixed blessings for women. Although more unskilled and semi-skilled jobs may be created there, neither the pay nor the working conditions are likely to be very rewarding. Women's dominant position in the service sector may in the short run also put them in a precarious position. This sector is hurt by currency devaluations and fiscal stringency which are part of reform programmes.

There are few areas where reform helps women in their reproductive roles. Price increases, as subsidies are reduced and the forint depreciates, will make provisioning the household more and more difficult. The change in tax policies also leads to reductions in household income. Certainly real reductions in government

spending on family support, and pensions can only make life more difficult for women.

Potential benefits for women may materialize in the future. Shifting trade to Western markets may benefit women given their distribution across occupations and the types of Hungarian goods demanded by the West. The potential for long run growth in Hungary's service sector also holds out hope for additional employment opportunities for women. Women's strong background in economics and finance puts them in a particularly good position to benefit from the growth of the private financial sector too. This same background also provides hope for greater representation in management positions as firms become more market-oriented.

Restructuring is a necessary but difficult process. To mitigate the harsh short run impact on women of reform and stabilization, the government must provide the financing for a safety-net for its population. Although a few small steps have been taken in that direction more must be done. Beyond this there is a need to strengthen women's organizations to ensure that women have a stronger voice in the workplace, and are able to gain access to resources in the new economic environment found in Hungary.

### **Czechoslovakia**

*From "The Changing Economic Status of Women in the Period of Transition to A Market Economy System: The Case of Czechoslovakia after 1989", by Liba Paukert.*

The integration of women in the economy was one of the characteristic features of the centrally planned system which prevailed in Central and Eastern Europe during the past four decades. The transition to a market economy system will necessarily cause profound changes in the employment structure and in labour market conditions. The question arises as to how these changes will affect the vulnerable groups of workers such as women, young people, older workers, the handicapped or the ethnic minorities. Women in particular might have to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of economic reform in terms of decline in employment and loss of income, and their hard-won economic status might deteriorate. Although in the long run they should have a great deal to win under the new system in terms of free choice of occupation, free choice of education and training, greater flexibility of working time, access to entrepreneurial status and ultimately of rising income and living standards, they might also lose -- mainly in the short run -- by becoming massively unemployed during the restructuring period. For many of them, this unemployment spell might lead to discouragement and to a final

departure from the labour force. The degree to which female labour will be affected by the reforms will depend on the flexibility and adaptability of the former employment structure and on the size of the shifts in female labour caused by the newly developing market pressures. It will also depend on the depth and duration of the transition-related crisis and on the rapidity with which the current depression can be overcome. This is in turn at least partly related to international aid and the inflow of foreign investment.

The impact of reform on employment and on women's employment particularly is almost certain to differ from country to country particularly because reform measures started to be applied at different points of time and their intensity and content have been different. In some countries women have been less affected by the reform than men. In Hungary for example, women's unemployment rates have been lower than men's, and women have been under-represented in unemployment in all occupational groups. In other countries, on the contrary, the current restructuring has affected women more than men.

Czechoslovakia represents one of the cases where women have been more affected by the economic reform than men. As monthly data on unemployment rates started to be published, it soon became apparent that women's unemployment was growing systematically faster than that of men. By summer 1991, women's unemployment rates exceeded male rates practically in all the regions of the country and the gap continued to widen in the autumn months. Given the high female participation rates, women's unemployment has become higher than men's in absolute numbers in all the regions.

The high rate of women's unemployment represents a major social problem because women's earnings are needed "to feed the family". This is much more true in Czechoslovakia than in most of the industrial market economy countries, due to the considerably lower average per capita income and to the higher share of food and other essentials in the average household expenditure. The structure of earnings which has developed during the past forty years is such that the average two-parent family needs two incomes in order to afford an "average" pattern of consumption. In addition, an important proportion of women workers are heads-of-household as a result of the relatively high divorce rate. In their case, loss of employment creates a particularly serious problem.

### *Women's Working Conditions*

During the planned economy period of development, considerable efforts were made and real success achieved in providing childcare facilities and health protection for working

women. But as time went on women's working conditions in Czechoslovakia started to lag behind those of the industrialized market economy countries in several other respects. Working hours in particular continued to be long and part-time employment could rarely be arranged.

Since high labour inputs were one of the built-in features of the centrally planned system, not only was there over-employment in terms of numbers but working hours were also very long. In 1988 for example, Czechoslovakia had the longest weekly hours in the manufacturing sector of all the European countries reporting this data to the ILO including Hungary and Poland.<sup>19</sup> A gender breakdown is not available on working hours for Czechoslovakia. However, a careful comparison of the working hours in individual manufacturing branches and of the share of women in these branches shows that many activities with a high share of female employment such as food processing have had very long weekly hours while some typically "male" branches such as basic metals have had much shorter hours (44.7 and 41.7 in 1988 respectively). Also in the retail trade sector, where women represent 75 percent of the labour force, working hours have been extremely long. Moreover, in Czechoslovakia, there have been relatively shorter and fewer holidays in comparison with OECD countries. Average working hours per worker and per year have been higher in Czechoslovakia by almost one-fifths. Apart from maternity leave and parental leave in the case of a sick child, women were not given more free days than men, contrary to the practice in the GDR for example.

Interestingly, the 1991 Survey of Women in the Labour Market, commissioned by the ILO from the Public Opinion Research Institute in Prague, has shown that 82 percent of women considered their working hours as fully or generally satisfactory. The 18 percent that did not consisted largely of mothers of young children, aged 18 to 29. But the survey has also shown that as many as 70 percent of women could leave their work place during working hours in order to attend to their own personal matters: 37 percent could "disappear" without much problem, of which 13 percent "any time" and 24 percent "from time to time", while another 33 percent declared to be able to do so exceptionally. This typical practice could to a certain extent be assimilated with part-time or flexible hour arrangements found in the industrial market economy countries. However, it contained many elements of arbitrariness and was particularly unfair to women doing assembly line work and to women in small localities where such "infringement of labour discipline" could be more easily discovered and possibly sanctioned. In all cases, it led to favouritism and its

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<sup>19</sup> *ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1989-1990* (Geneva: ILO, 1990).

basic lack of fairness contributed to the general deterioration of working morale. With the introduction of market conditions this practice should gradually disappear, while working hours should be shortened, which has already started to happen in 1989 and 1990. More part-time work should also become available, particularly for mothers of young children.

### *Distribution of Female Labour by Sector and by Industry*

The industrialization drive and the process of deep economic restructuring which were launched after the introduction of the planned economy system in 1948, were destined to integrate the country's economy into the CMEA block and to adjust its export level and structure to the import requirements of the other CMEA members particularly of the Soviet Union. This required the channelling of vast labour resources, male and female, to industry, especially to heavy industry and to heavy engineering, which soon became the country's main export branch. By 1961, 54 percent of the male workforce and 37 percent of the female workforce were engaged in the secondary sector of the economy (manufacturing, mining, public utilities and construction). In 1989, the respective shares of male and female industrial employment were 57 and 37 percent. Few quantitative data are available so far on the occupational structure of women's employment in industry, but the existing evidence points to an over-employment of women in industrial white-collar jobs. A large proportion of these jobs is likely to be suppressed, as the market system starts operating. The first job suppressions are likely to concern the low-skilled white-collar jobs. Available evidence shows that this has already started to happen.

The policy of industrial over-employment and of cheap labour resulted not only in the wasting of labour resources but also in an insufficient level of capital investment. The slow modernization -- particularly in the light, i.e. in the "women's" industries -- was an important factor retarding the growth of productivity. Moreover, it led to poor working conditions (insufficient automation, high content of physical labour, high accident rates, lack of modern hygiene, etc.) which in turn was detrimental to labour morale. Large numbers of women workers have been employed in obsolete plants in the light industries using outdated technology. Under the new market economy conditions, the obsolete plants will either be closed, which will further add to the growth of female unemployment, or they will be modernized and fitted with up-to-date (perhaps computerized) technology, in which case women workers will face the necessity to undergo intensive re-training if they wish to remain employed. Their jobs might become threatened by male competition as unemployment rises. The often observed phenomenon of unemployed men being

more easily hired than women in times of a depression can already be observed in Czechoslovakia.

However, some skilled women's blue-collar jobs in light industries, particularly in those with export prospects, provided they can be rapidly fitted with adequate technology, might be shielded or even advantaged by the new shifts in domestic and foreign demand. This is because production and exports of some well-designed, quality-competitive light industrial goods such as glass, china, ceramics, furniture and wood products are likely to increase, while the engineering industries which before 1989 employed 30 percent of the male and 19 percent of the female manufacturing workforce have already started to face serious sales problems, largely due to the disintegration of the CMEA trade flows.

Between 1948 and 1989, employment in the service sector developed at a relatively slow pace. In 1989 only 30 percent of the male workforce and 53 percent of the female workforce were employed in service activities, compared to 43 and 70 percent respectively in neighbouring Austria, for example.

Even more important than the low standard of services to the population was the lagging behind of services for production and business, such as industrial design, management consulting, legal services, marketing, banking, insurance and other commercial services. In 1989, only 1.4 percent of the total employment and 1.9 percent of female employment was in banking, insurance and business services. It may also be pointed out that the low standard of the banking services represents an obstacle to the development of foreign business relations. Their improvement, through programmes of training for women in modern banking techniques, for instance, would represent a good social investment that would help in the short run and pay off in the longer run, when the economy starts to grow again. The growth of the previously under-developed and under-staffed service branches should provide new employment opportunities for women. But this growth is conditioned by the improvement in the overall level of economic activity. Under the present conditions of depression and decline in output and in consumer demand, services can hardly be expected to develop, with the exception of tourist services.

In summary, the current recession and the decline in output and consumer demand act as a "trap" for women workers, who become redundant in the formerly over-staffed industrial branches and activities, but who have difficulties in being re-hired in the branches with obvious growth perspectives, as long as the depression continues. A selective set of support measures to the service activities with a growth potential and to the export-oriented

light industries would benefit female employment apart from being an anti-recessionary policy instrument.

### *Women's Earnings and Male-Female Earnings Differentials*

With respect to money earnings, the planned economy system privileged hard physical work, length of tenure, formal education and heavy industrial activities. The system thus contained a built-in mechanism of gender discrimination, since women have been worse off traditionally on all counts just mentioned. In Czechoslovakia, their retirement age, and hence their average age, has been lower, they tended to have shorter tenure, slightly less formal education and they have been concentrated in the light industries and in services. In the highly "feminized" branches of light industry and services wages were set at a lower level than in the typically male dominated activities such as mining or basic metal industries.

An earnings survey carried out in Czechoslovakia in June 1988 shows the overall male-female earnings differential for full-time workers and employees to be 29 percent, i.e. women's average pay to be 71 percent of the average male pay. The wage preference accorded to heavy physical work explains the relatively large pay gap in the manual worker category. The largest earnings gap, however, existed in the administrative and managerial category, implying that much fewer women than men acceded to the top managerial posts. A university education offered women a considerable bonus in terms of earning prospects. But even university educated women have had a much lower average salary than university educated men.

The male-female earnings gap in Czechoslovakia is situated within the range observed in OECD countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, women earn on average 68 percent of men's pay, while in Sweden they earn about 90 percent.

The question arises as to how the introduction of the market economy system, as well as the current growth of unemployment, will affect women's earnings in Czechoslovakia. The fact that women's unemployment is higher than men's and that managers already hire men for jobs previously held by women, is likely to depress women's wages. Previous experience of OECD countries shows, however, that in recession periods the male/female earnings gap need not necessarily widen, particularly in the public sector and in large enterprises, which still predominate in Czechoslovakia. But it is true that earnings differentials are generally bigger in the private than in the public sector. Thus, with the growth of the private sector, as privatization proceeds, the male-female earnings gap might have a tendency to increase. Female earnings suffer

particularly in small enterprises, where an important proportion of redundant women turns for "precarious" employment. This may occur also in Czechoslovakia.

### *Conclusions*

The change in the economic system and the radical economic reform currently taking place in Czechoslovakia should have profound effects on the labour force, both positive and negative. While in the long run the advantages should outweigh the disadvantages, in the short run, namely during the transition period, the costs might be high in terms of unemployment and falling real wages. Women and other vulnerable groups of workers have already started to be more severely affected than men.

After the launching of the reform "in earnest" in January 1991, unemployment started to grow and women's unemployment expanded faster than that of men. The fast growth of female unemployment represents a major social problem for a number of reasons, the main one being that a double income is necessary to guarantee the average living standards for the average family.

Since the 1950s, women have played a very important role in the economy. The share of women in the labour force kept growing throughout the last four decades. The 1991 population census has shown that women now represented 47 percent, i.e. almost a half, of the labour force. Women's labour force attachment has become strong. This is evidenced by the results of the 1991 survey on women workers carried out for the ILO in Czechoslovakia. The introduction of the market economy system should not, by itself, lead to a decline in women's labour force participation, since women's participation rates in Western industrialized countries have also been growing and have become almost equally high. The convergence occurred particularly during the last two decades. It may happen, however, that the growth of women's unemployment and its duration will lead to worker discouragement, which the 1991 survey on women workers has already indicated, although to a limited extent.

The net shifts in female employment are likely to be more important than the net shifts in male employment during the transition to a market economy system. This is likely to influence a faster growth of female unemployment. The previously under-sized service sector has a considerable growth potential under the market economy conditions and its development should offer employment opportunities largely to women but the growth of the service sector is conditioned by the end of the present recession and an upturn in consumer and enterprise demand.

Average women's full-time earnings amounted to 71 percent of the average men's earnings in 1988. The male-female earnings gap is comparable to the one found in the industrialized market economy countries. As the process of privatization proceeds in Czechoslovakia and the number of private enterprises increases, women's relative earnings might be adversely affected by the change, because in the private sector and in smaller enterprises the male-female earnings gap is known to be bigger than in the large enterprises and in the public sector. Special attention should be paid to this problem in the future.

The main areas where women could find new employment opportunities as the reform advances and market economy conditions prevail are: (i) The more dynamic, export-oriented light industries such as glass, china and household fittings and fixtures. (ii) Banking, insurance and business services and services to enterprises in general. (iii) The small private business sector which logically should expand very rapidly given its current low starting base. The 1991 survey of women workers revealed, however, that women's integration in private business activities has been so far more limited than could have been sometimes hoped for. (iv) Tourist services both large-scale and small-scale should offer good employment opportunities to women. Their advantage is that they are relatively little affected by the current recession and the dramatic fall in consumer demand, while they still benefit from the novelty of the opening up of the Central and Eastern European countries.

Within the framework of international aid offered to Czechoslovakia in order to facilitate its transition to a market economy system, certain projects have been specifically targeted at women workers. In November 1990, the ILO launched a technical cooperation project on Women in the Labour Market in the CSFR: plan of action for women during the transition to a market economy system. The project has been fully operational since Spring 1991. It covers a wide range of activities from the specially commissioned Survey on Women in the Labour Market to the dissemination of information through the Czechoslovak mass media on the basic principles of the market mechanism and on private business activities, to consultancy services for women and to country-wide training activities. This project is assisting a considerable number of women to cope with employment problems in the transition period, while gathering direct information and experience on the optimal plan of action for the future.

## The Soviet Union

*From "Gender and Restructuring: The Impact of Perestroika on Soviet Women", by Gail Lapidus.*

The role of women in the Soviet labour force has been shaped by a distinctive set of assumptions and historical developments that influence Soviet policy to this day and that are only now being reassessed. Central to the Soviet approach -- as it was to Marxist and Leninist theory -- was the conviction that women's entry into social production held the key to the creation of a genuinely socialist society. The family, by contrast, was initially seen as the very antithesis of the factory, the embodiment of tradition and backwardness; as Bukharin put it, the "most conservative stronghold of the old regime".

Soviet ideology emphasized the intrinsic value of work, as well as its contribution to economic independence, social status, and personal satisfaction. The role of "mere housewife" has been sharply devalued in Soviet society; Soviet surveys indicate that relatively few women would withdraw from the labour force even if it became economically feasible.

The large scale of female participation in Soviet economic life, however, has not obliterated many features that, in the USSR as elsewhere, distinguish male and female employment. Indeed, the sharpest line of differentiation among Soviet workers today is that of sex. In the occupational structure as in the family, sex remains a significant basis for the allocation of social roles, with the result that male and female workers differ in the distribution of income, skill, status, power, and even time.

The uneven distribution of women across economic sectors and occupations, combined with their under-representation in positions of high skill and responsibility, results in a considerable gap between male and female earnings. The publication of 1989 of the first Soviet figures on distribution of wages by age and sex largely confirms earlier Western estimates that average full time female earnings average 65 percent to 75 percent those of males.

Equality of economic opportunity for women has not followed automatically from higher levels of educational attainment and labour force participation. In the USSR as in the US, men derive greater benefits from educational and occupational attainments, even when women's work experience and levels of current labour force participation are comparable.

Despite the fact that Soviet women have entered many scientific and technical fields, sexual stereotyping of occupations

was not eliminated; in fact, it was explicitly sustained by official attitudes and policies. Measures that restricted the hiring of women for jobs considered unsuitable, or harmful to the female organism, that limited their employment in heavy or dangerous work, and that encouraged their entry into suitably "female" occupations served to channel and not merely to protect female labour.

Culturally and in legislation, household and family responsibilities are treated as primarily and properly the domain of women. At the same time, shortages of consumer goods and everyday services make household responsibilities especially onerous. Thus the fundamental assumption of Soviet economic and family policy that women, and women only, have dual roles, effectively assigns women a distinctive position in both the occupational and the family systems, and has important consequences for their behaviour in both domains.

The tendency for increased female education, employment, and level of professional qualification to be associated with lower rates of marriage, later marriage, high rates of divorce, and declining family size, and for stable family patterns and high birthrates to be found among the least "liberated" Soviet women, have provoked concern.

During the Brezhnev period, there was much discussion of the extreme tension between female work and family roles as currently defined, resulting in the deliberate limitation of family size. Taking a benign view of this trend, one Soviet writer noted:<sup>20</sup>

The current decline in the birth rate has certain negative consequences -- e.g., it will contribute to the manpower shortage -- but it also has some positive aspects. It can be viewed, in part, as a spontaneous response by women to their excessive work load and lack of equality with men -- a response that consists of eliminating the single factor over which they have the greatest control. The falling birthrate is an important -- in fact indispensable -- lever that women can use in their effort to achieve full equality with men.

For the Brezhnev leadership, these were alarming trends. By impinging on a wide range of economic, political, and military concerns, they compelled fundamental reconsideration of the whole spectrum of policies involving female work and family roles.

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<sup>20</sup> I. B. Riurikov, "Mestorozhdenia chast'ia", *Pravda* (July 9, 1983), p. 3.

## *Policy Dilemmas and Options under Brezhnev*

The irreplaceable contribution of women to both production and reproduction presented the Brezhnev leadership with a classic policy dilemma. As scholars and policy makers saw it, Soviet development induced two mutually contradictory processes. By opening a new range of educational and professional options for women, it encouraged them to acquire new skills, values, orientations, and aspirations that compete with their traditional domestic roles. At the same time, the high value attached to the family, the critical social roles assigned to it, and the large investments of time and energy needed to sustain it seriously constrained women's occupational commitments and achievements.

The resulting "contradictions", in the language of Soviet analysts, between the occupational and family roles of working women have had an extremely high economic, demographic, and social cost. They adversely affected women's health and welfare, as well as their opportunities for professional and personal development; they "engender tensions and conflicts in internal family relations, lead to a weakening of control over the conduct of children and a deterioration of their upbringing, and finally, [they are] one of the basic causes of the declining birthrate".<sup>21</sup>

These tensions, it was feared, were likely to be increased rather than diminished by economic, demographic, and technological trends. Thus it is with a heightened sense of urgency that the Brezhnev leadership began to confront the complex issues surrounding female labour and its social requisites and consequences. Enlisting the aid of social scientists as well as several newly created legislative and administrative bodies, it launched a serious and sustained quest for a strategy that would encourage a more effective use of scarce labour resources without further compromising family stability, and that would also reverse the declining birthrate in the developed regions of the USSR.

A number of writers called for a more systematic intervention by state, Party, and public organizations to inculcate egalitarian values. Even the post-revolutionary Women's Department (Zhenotdel) was held up as a model by one labour economist, who explicitly deplored its premature abolition by Stalin:

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<sup>21</sup> A. G. Kharchev, "Byt i sem'ia", pp. 9-22 in N. Solov'ev, I. Lazauskas, and Z.A. Iankova (eds.), *Problemy byta, braka i sem'i* (Vil'nius: Mintis, 1970), p. 19; N. M. Shishkan, *Trud zhenshchin v usloviakh razvitogo sotsializma* (Kishinev: Shtiinstsa, 1976), p. 38.

Unfortunately, the whole system of institutions created in the process of socialist construction for the resolution of the complex problem of women's work and everyday life ... was liquidated before it had completely fulfilled its special tasks.<sup>22</sup>

The more immediate problems faced by working mothers with young children would be alleviated by an expansion of part-time work rather than by extended maternity leaves. By making it possible for more women to enter the labour force, and by enabling mothers to maintain some continuity of employment without sacrificing the time available for child rearing and family chores, part-time employment would meet the needs of many women workers without incurring the extremely high costs of the more radical pro-natalist programme.

Clearly, the introduction of part-time work on a large scale would raise a host of unresolved problems. It is far more feasible in routine white-collar and service occupations than in highly skilled technical positions or supervisory jobs. In industry, it would require the creation of special sectors and assembly lines that would segregate part-time workers from the full-time labour force.

Even if the Brezhnev leadership was relatively slow in coming to an awareness of these economic and demographic issues, they gradually came to occupy an important place on the political agenda. A number of specific measures "to improve the conditions of labour and everyday life of working women" were included in the 10th Five-Year Plan outlined at the 25th Party Congress in March 1976, as well as in the new Soviet Constitution of 1977. The State Committee on Labour and Wages was reorganized with a broader mandate and renamed the State Committee on Labour and Social Questions; and, in October 1976, new standing commissions were created in both chambers of the Supreme Soviet and in the soviets of all republics to address the special problems of women workers and mothers.

In effect, the measures introduced under Brezhnev sought to strike a balance between a labour-extensive strategy and a labour-intensive one. On the one hand, they encouraged high female participation rates by raising minimum wages, expanding the childcare network, modifying the pension system, and exploring the possibilities for expansion of part-time work. At the same time, concern over declining birthrates was evident in the family

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<sup>22</sup> M. I. Sonin, "Aktual'nye sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie problemy zaniatosti zhenshchin", pp. 352-379 in A. Z. Maikov (ed.), *Problemy ratsional'nogo ispol'zovaniia trudovykh resurov* (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1973), pp. 378-379.

allowance programme introduced in 1974, which extended maternity leave benefits to kolkhoz (collective farm) women, liberalized sick leave for parents of young children, and expanded partially paid maternity leave to a full year. In this as in other areas, however, the Brezhnev leadership failed to act with the vigour and decisiveness necessary to address the problem adequately.

### *Women Under Perestroika*

The accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to the Soviet leadership in March 1985 and the inauguration of what became an increasingly far-reaching programme of reforms, had dramatic, though largely unintended, consequences for women's roles. On the one hand, the political changes associated with glasnost and democratization progressively undermined many of the taboos that had long constrained the discussion of gender issues, and created unprecedented opportunities for social and political activism around a broad range of causes. At the same time, the mounting economic crisis precipitated by the leadership's erratic economic policies drove sheer economic survival to the top of women's agendas. As rampant inflation and the breakdown of the consumer sector produced growing hardship and increasing social strain, "hunting and gathering" became a major preoccupation of women across the country. Moreover, the erosion of central government institutions, and the emergence of republics and even localities as major foci of decision-making, led to a *de facto* decentralization of policy-making and of resource allocation which affected women across a broad range of issues -- from job security to social welfare benefits to the availability of daycare. The crumbling of all-Union authority, and with it the very pretence of uniform nationwide policies, will result in increasing differentiation of women's positions from republic to republic and the growing influence of local conditions, traditions and needs.

To attempt even a broad sketch of the impact of perestroika on Soviet women is a daunting task, in part because of the contradictory nature of the political and the economic trends, in part because of the breathtaking speed of events, but above all because perestroika has brought a return to diversity and especially to the diverse regions and national cultures of the USSR.

None of the revolutionary changes we have been witnessing were anticipated in the first months and even years of the Gorbachev era. To the extent that Gorbachev had any new approach in mind to women's issues, its direction remained unclear and indeed contradictory. Some of his early initiatives gave women's issues higher visibility: his energetic advocacy of the promotion of more women in political life, and his appointment of Aleksandra Biryukova to the Party's powerful Secretariat; his role

in the creation of a national women's organization intended to link the Soviet Women's Committee to a broad nationwide network of local women's councils; and his emphasis on the need for new attention to social and family policy. The prominent role and unprecedented visibility of his wife, Raisa, however controversial, also altered the ethos of family secrecy and male domination traditionally surrounding the General Secretary.

Gorbachev's early economic policies appeared to signal more ominous implications for women. The effort to promote more rapid economic growth and increased technological innovation by stimulating greater competition within the workplace carried with it the prospect of massive dismissals of redundant workers and growing wage differentiation. Coupled with Gorbachev's call for an expansion of the service sector, they suggested the likelihood of a long-term shift in female labour force participation from industrial to service employment. Had the Soviet leadership in fact moved forward with a decisive economic programme aimed at marketization and privatization, Soviet women would now be confronting many of the problems of their counterparts in Poland, East Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. In the Soviet case, however, it has been the economic dislocation resulting from the absence of decisive reform that has had devastating consequences for women.

Nonetheless, even the relatively limited changes in economic organization and practice toward market economies have had an impact on women's roles. Although the early statistics remain sketchy and incomplete, the evidence suggests that women are a high percentage of recent layoffs, which have been concentrated among white-collar personnel to a greater extent than among workers. Because of the high proportion of women among pensioners, they are also bearing the brunt of rapid inflation. To what extent women will utilize new opportunities to become entrepreneurs, independent professionals or organized family firms, remains unclear. Under these conditions, the impact of Gorbachev's political reforms on Soviet women may strike some as a marginal issue. However, it may well be the case that the most positive and enduring legacy of Gorbachev's leadership will turn out to be the intellectual, political, and spiritual liberation his reforms unleashed.

The impact of glasnost on discussion of women's issues has been particularly dramatic. Not only has this discussion radically broadened in its scope, frankness, and forms of discourse, but a whole series of issues that were previously taboo -- including prostitution, rape, contraception and homosexuality -- have now become legitimate topics of analysis and debate. The first centre for the study of gender issues was recently launched in Moscow with the support of the Institute for Socio-Economic Problems of the Population. And just as terms like "command-administrative

system" and "totalitarianism" have been incorporated into current political discourse, concepts like "patriarchy" or "muzhkratia" (male-dominated bureaucracy) are increasingly a staple of feminist discourse.

Joined to the process of democratization, which unleashed an unprecedented wave of socio-political activism across the Soviet landscape, the past few years have also witnessed the emergence of a variety of new forms of feminist organization and mobilization.<sup>23</sup> Some are small-scale and relatively informal women's groups devoted largely to consciousness raising and to the study and dissemination of feminist literature, often Western in origin. Others, like the clubs of women journalists, or women writers, or women scholars, or women entrepreneurs are based on professional ties, often within a single city, and devoted to improving the status and conditions of women in a given field. Yet a third type is represented by the creation of women's sections within larger organizations or political movements not specifically concerned with women's issues; the women's group of Sajudis, the Lithuanian Popular Front, or the loose organization of women's deputies to the Supreme Soviet, are examples of this genre. Finally, there are more explicit political action groups, some, like the Soviet Women's Committee, long part of the establishment but now adapting to new conditions, and others -- like the organizations of mothers calling for changes in military practices -- spontaneous efforts to deal with new issues.

Political activism among Soviet women has been given further impetus not only by the new opportunities created by a more open and competitive political milieu, but by the decline in female representation in national and republic legislative bodies as a result of electoral reform. While the dismantling of the old quota system, which guaranteed a certain proportion of seats to women as well as to members of other social categories, has resulted in a sharp diminution of the proportion of female deputies -- from 33 percent to 16 percent at the all-Union level -- those who have gained political prominence are more likely to be genuine political actors rather than token appointees.

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<sup>23</sup> M. Buckley, "Gender and Reform", Paper presented at workshop on Perestroika in Historical Perspective, King's College, Cambridge, England (July 16-19, 1990).

## Eastern Europe

*From "Women's Economic Status in the Restructuring of Eastern Europe," by Monica Fong and Gillian Paull.*

### *Employment*

The aggregate labour force participation rate of women in Eastern Europe has been higher than in Western Europe and nearly on a par with that of men. As in the West, the form of that involvement has been very different from men, however. Segregation across sectors by sex has left women in occupations with less pay and less prestige; women are also under-represented in managerial and higher level positions within sectors. This partly explains the lower earnings of women relative to men.

The share of women in unemployment where it has existed has traditionally been higher than for men. The evidence suggests that this may become more pronounced during the transition phase, due to a lower probability of re-employment among women. Overall, women in Eastern Europe may be described as a secondary work force, occupying less desirable positions and more prone to unemployment during downturns in the demand for labour. Special attention to this other half of the labour force is therefore called for to smooth the economic transition.

### *Unemployment*

Throughout Eastern Europe unemployment has traditionally been very low, but is now beginning to emerge in substantial numbers or to rise from previous low levels across the region. In proportion to their labour force participation, women are over-represented among the unemployed and, in most countries, they constitute more than half of the unemployed. Available evidence on re-employment possibilities in Hungary and Poland suggests that women are likely to remain unemployed for longer periods than men. If this pattern continues, the share of women among the unemployed can be expected to increase substantially in the future, as new unemployed are added to the pool of unemployed women and most remain there.

For example, in Poland, unemployment began to increase rapidly at the beginning of 1990 and by April 1991 had reached nearly 1.4 million and an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent. Contrary to predictions made prior to the January 1990 stabilization programme, employment has declined mainly as a consequence of a generalized contraction in output, rather than as a result of

massive lay-offs through sectoral restructuring.<sup>24</sup> Current estimates indicate that unemployment may peak at between 1.8 and 2.5 million in 1991-1992.<sup>25</sup> In Poland women have a larger share of unemployment. Women constitute 58 percent of the unemployed, while their share in the labour force is 46 percent. Not all unemployed are entitled to unemployment benefits. Women can be at a considerable disadvantage in finding new jobs. In Poland vacancies have traditionally been classified by sex, and recent data in some areas show a steady increase in the number of jobless per vacancy, with the number of vacancies for males outnumbering those for females at three to one. The prospects for re-employment for unemployed women thus appear to be much worse than for men.

Similarly, major unemployment has not yet occurred in Bulgaria: even in mid-1990, there were more reported vacancies than registered unemployed. In July, there were 22,400 registered unemployed, of which approximately 63 percent were women and half were between the ages of 30 and 50. However, by February 1991, the unemployed had reached 136,000 and by April the unemployment rate is estimated to be 4.6 percent, with the proportion of women remaining over 60 percent. Given that women constitute marginally less than half of the labour force, the unemployment rate for women is clearly higher than that for men. It is estimated that the unemployment rate will rise to between 6.7 percent in 1991 and 10.9 percent by 1993.<sup>26</sup>

In all countries in Eastern Europe, employees with low qualifications, employees with regular absenteeism (including women with small children and workers with health problems) and less performance orientated employees are at greater risk. In addition, those workers whose long-term commitment to their job is judged to be doubtful are at high risk, such as young men before compulsory military service or young girls before marriage. In the case of Poland, Sopniewska (n.d.) reports that women, together with commuters, workers who own small farms, elderly people, leavers of company trade schools and the disabled are among the first to be fired.

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<sup>24</sup> For example, see Fabrizio Coricelli and Ana Revenga, *Wages and Unemployment in Poland: Recent Developments and Policy Issues* (World Bank, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> World Bank, *Social Sector Statistics for Central European Countries*, (Data on Disk Files), 1991.

<sup>26</sup> World Bank, *Bulgaria: Crisis and Transition to a Market Economy* (January), No. 9046-BUL (1991).

## *The Real and Perceived Cost of Female Labour*

Fairly extensive maternity and childcare leaves, return rights to employment after these, and company provision of creches and kindergartens have facilitated the employment of women with small children in most East European countries. For Hungary, Adamik reports that mothers worked on the average 50 percent of the standard working hours due to their legal concessions and leave taken for children's illnesses. The direct cost of such provisions to the company in terms of direct expenditures, as well as indirect costs of, say, keeping employment open during childcare leaves or work lost to care for sick children, were of minor significance to a socialist enterprise. In post-reform conditions, however, such costs can no longer be borne by profit-maximizing enterprises, which will contract for the cheapest qualified labour. For women the development of a government-run social insurance system is therefore one of the priorities on the reform agenda.

Although the child-related costs of female employment must be transferred from the firm to the government, the perception of women as a less reliable worker may continue and influence employers' demand for female labour. Despite their high participation in the labour force, women in Eastern Europe have remained responsible for the overwhelming majority of childcare and household work. For example, in Hungary, surveys have shown that women are responsible for 75 percent of domestic labour.<sup>27</sup>

This unequal distribution of household obligations between the sexes inevitably has spill-over effects on the labour market. It is argued that women are less able to take employment far from their homes, to do overtime or to undertake further training, because of housework and childcare. They are perceived as unstable employees, who are compelled to take more time off work, to care for children, and increasingly, elderly parents. Because of the policies of maternity leave, young women are perceived as "imminent mothers" who are bound to be absent from the work place for many years while government regulations require the employer to hold the original job open.

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<sup>27</sup> See Barbara Einhorn and Swasti Mitter, "A Comparative Analysis of Women's Industrial Participation during the Transition from Centrally Planned to Market Economies in East Central Europe", Consultancy Paper prepared for UN Regional Seminar on the Impact of Economic and Political Reform on the Status of Women in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Vienna (8-12 April, 1991). (The distinction between household work and childcare may be significant. Fertility levels in Eastern Europe are below replacement, with less than two children per woman. Over a life's work, childcare is therefore likely to take the smaller portion of a woman's non-working time, and housework the major share.)

With a triple work burden, limited opportunities for promotion or higher income, and decreasing job satisfaction, such an attitude on the part of employers may well have been correct in the years preceding the reform. In a rapidly changing economy, increased unemployment, lower incomes, higher prices and increased labour mobility by one or both spouses, neither an assured income, nor the traditional family model of the two-parent household may continue to apply. A decline in the participation of women in the labour market may be seen as an opportunity for women to be full-time mothers, but few women will now be able to afford being full-time mothers. However, unless or until the previous attitudes on women's employment change they can have a tangible effect on the demand for female labour.

Potential developments in labour demand during the reform process are not unidirectional in their effect on the position of women. Many elements of the restructuring process could be favourable to women. Although women will lose jobs in the administration and clerical positions of many enterprises, the declining sectors in the economy are expected to be the male dominated ones and the areas of potential expansion are those now dominated by women through experience and education. In addition, women have developed a number of entrepreneurial skills which could prove advantageous in the private sector. However, women are at higher risk of job loss and are facing greater difficulties in attaining reemployment. Cultural traditions, which stress women's roles outside the labour force, have cast women in the role of a secondary and less reliable labour force and may create a preference for men among employers. The balance between these two sets of influences will depend upon the ability of women to improve their value as employees by exploiting their skill advantage and through their adaptability to the new economic environment, including the opportunity to retrain, to utilize employment services, and to become self-employed.

Probable developments in female labour supply are less clear. Younger women are likely to experience a decline in their incentive to work as the provision of childcare facilities is reduced and maternity leave and childcare benefits are increased. Temporary withdrawal from the labour force will erode women's labour market position further. Women run great risks of marginalizing their already weaker position in the labour force. However, a strong influence operating in the opposite direction is the increasing need for a second income as real wages decline. This may prove sufficient reason for women who have the option, including women of retirement age, to remain economically active because they simply cannot afford not to work.

A number of opinion polls suggest that the preference of women would be to continue to work if given the choice. For

example, in 1986 in Hungary, 77 percent of women questioned believed that they would keep their jobs even if they were in a position to stay at home, although the majority also expressed a preference to be able to work part-time or at home. About a third were in favour of work for material reasons, while the remainder justified their choice for reasons of interest in their work or to participate in the community.<sup>28</sup> In the case of Bulgaria, only 20 percent of working women showed an inclination to stay at home according to a study carried out in February 1991.

The effect of reform on women's choices is unclear. The tenor of the emerging debate suggests that many women would accept unemployment for the time being, looking forward to the opportunity to be able to spend more time with their children or attending domestic responsibilities. Staying at home is becoming "fashionable", as women seek greater involvement in raising their children. In the longer run, however, new employment opportunities created as a result of the reforms may offer women greater choice in their occupation, more interesting work and a level of employment more suitably matched to their skill and educational qualifications, and raising a small family may not be considered a full life's work. In the longer term, therefore, women's preferences may incline toward greater participation in the workforce, as has been the trend in Western Europe.

There exists a wide range of policies in these and related areas for decision-makers in Eastern Europe that will become highly influential, both on the changing role of women in employment during the transition phase and on the efficiency and productivity of the economy in the longer term. Specific consideration of how such policies affect women's economic roles becomes an important part of the national planning in Eastern Europe, and a major item on the political agenda.

### *Conclusions and Suggested Proactive Measures*

One of the objectives of the reform programmes in Eastern Europe is to reduce the role of government in the economy. Government involvement affecting the role of women in employment has been a source of inefficiency through gender-based regulations on employment. The reduction of government involvement in these areas would enhance efficiency and the employment opportunities for women.

One proactive measure is to remove current regulations on employment for women, including restrictions on nightshift,

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<sup>28</sup> Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 1989.

overtime work, or work with health risks. Protective legislation should be extended to all workers, and not be limited to women.

However, there are cases in market economies when government action is the optimal policy and it is important that the reform programmes recognize these areas when the role of government is being reduced more generally. A major area where it is efficient for the government to play an active role is in the case of incomplete markets. The employment services providing job information, job search facilities and career counselling should be developed to meet the particular needs of women, including older women with obsolete skills and low education levels and women re-entering the labour force following maternity or childcare leave. Insufficient provision of childcare facilities in Eastern Europe and the lack of a well-developed service sector reduces the ability of women to participate in the labour force. Government provision of such services, at least until they developed more fully in the private sector, would provide greater choice for women and enhance the availability of female labour resources.

Another area is the lack of information about the value of women as employees. Government policy can promote an improved understanding and use of the potential female labour force by providing information on the skills that women have to offer, by reducing unjustified perceptions the women have less value as employees and by encouraging women to take advantage of such measures as retraining and employment services.

## Part III. Women and Politics

### Central and Eastern Europe

*From "Women and Politics in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe", by Sharon Wolchik.*

Women's direct roles in bringing about the downfall of communist systems in Central and Eastern Europe differed according to the way in which those governments fell. In Hungary and Poland, in which the end of one-party rule took place as the result of a more prolonged process of negotiation between reformist factions of the communist parties and members of the opposition, women's roles were insignificant. Given their exclusion from positions of power within the Communist Party, few women were represented in official positions. Although women had been active in Solidarity in Poland and in the smaller dissident movement that developed in Hungary in the last decades of communist rule, they did not hold leadership positions in those movements and so were not found among dissident representatives at the roundtable discussions that led to the end of communist rule in these countries. However, although women's direct roles in bringing about the end of communist rule were limited in these cases, in both of these countries, as elsewhere in the communist world, women had contributed indirectly to undermining the legitimacy and support of the communist system, in some cases by their support for dissident objectives, and, more frequently, by their role in fostering values and attitudes in the home that contradicted those promulgated by the communist leadership. In those countries, such as Czechoslovakia, the former GDR, and Romania, in which mass demonstrations were instrumental in bringing down the old regime, women participated in massive numbers along with men.

Despite the role that women played, either directly or indirectly, in undermining the old systems, the political marginalization of women that characterized the communist period has continued to a large degree in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. The end of the Communist Party's monopoly of political power, the elimination of censorship, and the repluralization of politics and policy-making that have followed created new opportunities for women as well as for men to express their political views, articulate their interests, and organize with others who share similar political perspectives. Women as well as men thus may now use a much broader variety of tools to make their preferences known to political leaders and urge action on their own behalf.

As the very high turnout rates for the elections of 1990 and 1991, which reached 96 percent in the former GDR and 95 percent

in Czechoslovakia, demonstrated, many Central and Eastern European women were eager to make use of the opportunity to support the political changes underway by voting in elections that, with the exception of those in Romania and Albania, were widely judged to be free and fair by outside observers. Many also appear to have joined the numerous interest groups and voluntary associations that have sprung up in all of these countries. Certain women have also begun to use their new opportunities to be active politically to organize independent women's groups or to pressure political leaders to take action on issues of concern to them.

Most women continue to take a very limited role in political life in the post-communist period. Evident in the small numbers of women who emerged as leaders in the mass movements, such as Civic Forum, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, and the National Salvation Front in Romania, that led the process of change or emerged as negotiations with the government continued, this trend is also reflected in the relatively small numbers of women who were selected as leaders of the newly formed or newly independent political parties throughout the region. It is also evident in the fact that there are very few women in the national governments formed immediately after the fall of communist systems and legitimated (with the Romanian exception) by free elections, or in the legislative elites elected in the 1990 elections.

The end of the Communist Parties' manipulation of the political recruitment process and the change in the function of government bodies from largely symbolic organs whose chief function was to approve decisions already made by the communist parties to actual policy-making groups have been accompanied by a decrease in women's representation in these bodies. The results of the 1990 elections in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria are typical. In Czechoslovakia, women accounted for approximately 12 percent of the candidates in the parliamentary elections held in June 1990. They comprised approximately six percent of those elected to the state-wide legislature. Women's proportion of candidates ranged from 4.5 to 16.7 percent in the March 1990 elections in Hungary. Twenty-eight women in all were elected, a total of 7.25 percent of all parliamentary seats. In Bulgaria, women comprised 14 percent of the candidates in the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the successor to the Bulgarian Communist Party in the June 1990 elections and seven percent of the candidates of the SDS (Sayuz na Demokratichnite Sili, or Union of Democratic Forces, an umbrella organization of 16 opposition groups). Eight percent of the legislators chosen in those elections were women.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Information from FBIS-EEU-90-056 (22 March 1990), pp. 50-54; *Radio Free Europe Report on Eastern Europe* (May 25, 1990), p. 30; *Radio Free Europe* (July 27, 1990).

In all three countries, women comprised a higher proportion of candidates of the Communist Party or its successor than of other parties. In a pattern common in other contexts, women's representation in leading positions in these parties has also increased, now that the power and role of the parties themselves have decreased.

The proportions of women among national level legislators in these countries, which are similar to those found in the rest of the countries in the region, are significantly lower than they were during the communist period. There are also fewer women than in the communist period who hold leadership positions in the legislatures or ministerial positions.

Women candidates and leaders in the post-communist period have social backgrounds and educational levels that are fairly close to those of their male counterparts. Although many women candidates and leaders continue to be drawn from occupations, such as medicine, education, culture, and the humanities, in which women predominate in the labour force, the concentration of women deputies among those who were ordinary workers or agricultural workers that prevailed during the communist period has ended.

However, women's continued exclusion from the exercise of political power in the governments that have replaced communist rule in the region at present has implications for women's situation and gender equality that go beyond the small numbers of women involved. The limited number of women who were chosen as or presented themselves as candidates and the smaller proportion who were elected appear to reflect broader views concerning proper roles for women.

### *The Legacy of the Communist Period*

Part of the explanation for women's limited roles in the exercise of political power or even interest in political affairs at present is to be found in the impact of 40 years of communist rule on women's roles and the widespread rejection of the pattern of change imposed from above. But, there are also a number of structural elements of the current political situation that bear examination.

One of the most obvious of these is the fact that, almost two years after the end of communist rule in the region, the political systems are still in flux. With the exception of Romania, most of the countries in the area that are no longer communist held free and fair elections to legitimate the new governments formed soon after

the end of communist rule. However, as numerous analysts have noted, the contours of the current political spectrum vary from country to country, as does the extent to which new political leaders had succeeded in changing the way that old institutions operate or creating new institutions appropriate to democratic political life.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, in all cases, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, the three countries widely thought to have the best chances of making a successful transition to democracy, the situation is still very fluid. As the surprisingly good showing of a virtually unknown Polish emigre in the Presidential elections in Poland in 1990 and the decrease in support for Civic Forum and Public Against Violence in Czechoslovakia between June 1990 parliamentary and the November 1990 local elections demonstrated, the political preferences and attitudes of ordinary citizens continue to be volatile.

Another feature of the present situation common to all of the countries of the region is the absence of a firm party system. The good showing of newly created umbrella organizations such as those that led the revolutions or developed from the earlier opposition and other citizens' movements in the 1990 elections suggested that a new politics of social movements, based on the rejection not only of one party rule, but of party rule itself, might predominate in the region. The continuation of such a politics of social movements, or non-partisanship, might have been beneficial to women, for it might have, as in the early days of the post-communist period, created space for non-traditional issues to enter the political arena. A form of politics based on non-hierarchical, non-traditional organizations might also have created greater opportunities for a redefinition of politics to include more of the issues of greater concern to women.

In 1991, interest in joining political parties continues to be low throughout the region, but the non-partisan politics of the early post-communist period itself is being called into question. In Poland, where Solidarity enjoyed a position unique in the region in the early months of the post-communist era, the Presidential elections brought several of the underlying divisions of the organization into the open, and the organization itself remains fragmented. In Czechoslovakia, Civic Forum, the non-partisan group formed in the early days after the brutal beating of students

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<sup>30</sup> See, *inter alia*, Voytek Zubek, "Walesa's Leadership," in *Problems of Communism* (January-April 1991); Rudolf L. Tokes, "Hungary's New Political Elites: Adaptation and Change, 1989-90", in *Problems of Communism* (November-December 1990), pp. 44-65; Ellen Comisso, "Property Rights, Liberalism, and the Transition from 'Actually Existing' Socialism", in *East European Politics and Societies* (Winter 1991); Bob Deacon and Julia Szalai, *Social Policy in the New Eastern Europe* (Aldershot, Hants: Avebury, 1990).

in November 1989 that galvanized the nation, was clearly the dominant political force in the Czech Lands in 1990, although it faced a Communist Party that continued to have greater support than those in other countries in which one-party rule had been successfully challenged. By early 1991, internal divisions between the supporters of Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus, architect and chief advocate of Czechoslovakia's plan to move rapidly to recreate a market economy, and many former dissidents, including some who had supported the reforms of 1968, who want the state to bear more of the burden of the transition, resulted in an agreement which effectively split the Forum into two groups, Klaus's Citizens Democratic Party and the smaller Civic Movement. Recent public opinion polls show very limited support for the latter group, which is the heir to the non-partisan tradition of Civic Forum. The split also means that the Communist Party is the single strongest political force in the Federal Assembly. Internal divisions have also split Public Against Violence, the political force that led the revolution in Slovakia.<sup>31</sup> In Hungary, the divisions within the former opposition took institutional form before the 1990 elections and continue to be reflected in the country's political life. Similar divisions among the opposition in Bulgaria were among the factors responsible for the two-staged process by which communist rule ended in that country. With the rapid decrease in support for the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the successor of the Bulgarian Communist Party, that occurred in 1990, Bulgarian political life is also fragmented. In Romania, the continued dominance of old party leaders in the guise of the National Salvation Front has effectively prevented much development on the part of other parties or movements.

A further feature of the current political situation that deserves mention for its impact on women's participation is the importance of "personalities", or individuals with high profiles, in political contests and political life in general at present. Given the absence of strong political parties with well-developed lower level organizations to recruit and provide resources to support candidates, parliamentary as well as local level elections have tended to turn on the extent to which candidates are already known by the public. Since few women emerged in leadership roles in the revolutions or changes of regime, few received the kind of press coverage or media attention that male leaders did. Women were thus handicapped in the elections by their lack of visibility at the national level. Lack of data prevents me from assessing the extent to which women were hurt by the tendency to rely on the equivalent of local level "notables" at lower levels at this time. But, the fact that women were less likely to occupy positions of

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<sup>31</sup> See Sharon Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, Economics and Society* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1991).

leadership and responsibility (even in areas, such as education, medicine, and the professions, in which they predominated), than men during the communist period suggests that they would therefore have been less likely to have been included in the group of alternative local leaders thought of as likely candidates to replace officials compromised by their cooperation with the communist regime when the elections approached.

Finally, women's political roles and consideration of women's issues at present are also influenced by the magnitude and number of changes that the transition to post-communist rule and the market entails. The tasks that face those who are attempting to lead the countries of Central and Eastern Europe at present in both the economic and political realms are too well-known to need enumeration. In addition to the steps needed to create or recreate democratic governments, deal with the remnants of the old system in the behaviour and values of the population, reform bureaucracies, reinstitute market economies, reorient external economic relations, and deal with the negative residue of four decades of communist rule, the new leaders in the region have also faced a number of challenges originating in the external environment, including the impact of the Gulf Crisis and War, and the disintegration of the CMEA trading system.

The process of being in transition, irrespective of the kind of institutions or policies that emerge, in itself is an important feature of public and private life at present. In addition to the practical problems that leaders and citizens face in the political and economic spheres, which have caused both leaders and women to see women's issues as secondary at present, there are also the psychological costs of tradition to individuals and families. Although there has been little systematic study of their effect, such costs may influence women's willingness and ability to be involved in politics both directly and indirectly. In the first case, the lack of certainty about the competence and procedures of particular governmental or other political bodies undoubtedly increases the costs of becoming politically involved. In the second, women's traditional roles in the home may well make them less likely to venture into additional outside activities at a time when running the household has become more complicated, if only because accustomed ways of getting by developed during the communist period have had to be changed to some degree or other, and in a situation in which family members are likely to be experiencing greater stress in other areas of their lives.

Many men and women view feminism, or explicit focus on women's needs apart from those of society as a whole, as a luxury they cannot afford at present. At times, these attitudes are expressed in an openly anti-feminist manner. Other leaders argue that securing democracy is the first precondition for achieving

feminist objectives. Czechoslovakia's ambassador to the United States, Rita Klimova has noted, for example, that "Feminism is a flower on democracy".

Future developments in women's political involvement will depend in part on broader political developments in the region, and, particularly, on the extent to which political leaders succeed in institutionalizing democracy. Steps toward institutionalizing democratic procedures and norms clearly will contribute to successful transitions to democratic rule in the region. Paradoxically, however, such steps may have negative implications for the development of more active political roles by women. The experiences of women's movements in several Latin American transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule suggest, for example, that the solidifying of political alignments and the return to more routinized political patterns may decrease the space available for women or freeze them out of the political realm again. Thus, even in those cases in Latin America in which active women's movements had developed prior to the end of authoritarian rule, women and their concerns were once again marginalized as the new governments established their rule more firmly.

### *Future Possibilities*

Current developments in these countries point in opposite directions in regard to the levels and kind of political involvement by women we are likely to see in the near future. Given the trends discussed above and the importance in other transitions from authoritarian rule of what goes on in the early part of the transition period, the situation is not encouraging. In many cases in Latin America and Southern Europe, the fluidity of the early stage of the transition and the greater space for new forms of politics and new groups in politics evident as a result allowed women's groups greater influence than they previously had experienced. However, as the gradual decline in the importance of women's groups and actions as the situation normalized illustrates, even in these cases, the ability of groups to translate their temporarily greater influence into power in the new political system that emerges depends on the resources, agenda, and organizational abilities of the group involved. It also depends on the kinds of political resources that are valued in the emerging political system, and on the extent to which women possess these or are interested in obtaining them. The myths and perceptions of who has the right to enter politics, and range of legitimate issues that prevail in the early period also have an important influence on the nature and accessibility of political life once political structures and institutions solidify.

In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the insistence on symbolic mobilization of women and the actions of the leaders of the official women's organization leaders, as well as the decades long experience of the population with the contradictions that the strategy of gender role change and other elite policies created for women have reduced the interest most women have in politics in any form. The greater involvement of women at the outset of the transitions that occurred in several Latin American countries thus has little parallel. Central and East European women, then, will start from a lower base as the political situation normalizes.

The need for women to arrange new ways of obtaining the necessities of life so that they can supply their families with what they need will continue as economic reforms continue. The overwhelming uncertainty that widespread social change brings also will persist for some time to come. Both of these features in turn may be expected to reinforce the attitudes discussed above concerning the inappropriateness, or even lack of usefulness, of women's political activity. They may also deflect interest from steps to pressure political leaders to deal with the issues of greatest concern to women.

On the other hand, there are also several elements in the current situation that could engender higher levels of involvement on the part of women. The move toward capitalism and the market has already created and will continue to create new hardships for the populations of Central and Eastern Europe. Given their continued responsibility for the running of home and family on a day to day basis, and the lack of change in gender roles in the division of labour within the home, these burdens are falling most heavily on women. Women will also bear a disproportionate share of the dislocations economic transition is creating within the workplace. As trends in Poland, Bulgaria, what was formerly East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia illustrate, levels of unemployment are higher among women workers than among their male counterparts. Women are also facing new obligations and pressures to perform better and acquire new skills at the workplace as economic reform creates pressure on managers and entrepreneurs to operate profitably. It is also likely that the rejection of the old, communist-sponsored version of equality and the relegitimization of traditional attitudes toward women and the family will result in more open discrimination against women workers and higher levels of sexual harassment at the workplace. Young, highly educated women are also likely to face greater difficulty than their male schoolmates in finding employment suited to their qualifications and interests in the current economic and political climate than they did previously.

The motives these developments may create for women to organize, to articulate and defend their interests will be

supplemented by the many cuts in social services and social welfare provisions, and the increased cost of such services that austerity programmes and efforts to cut government budgets have already begun to bring in many Central and East European countries.

In the early post-communist period, there have been mass protests by women around several kinds of issues. The first, and one of the most likely sources of political mobilization of women, are challenges to women's right to control reproduction. Disparate regulations concerning abortion threatened to slow the process of German unification in 1990, and attempts to restrict abortion greatly provoked mass protests not only in Czechoslovakia, but also in Poland, where most citizens oppose restrictions, despite the role of the Catholic church.

Developments in the region since the end of communist rule indicate that it is also possible to mobilize women around environmental issues. Certain women supported environmental groups and took part in protests concerning environmental issues during the communist period. Women's groups in Hungary for example, organized independent protests concerning the environmentally unsound Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam. Many women, particularly intellectuals, appear to be active in environmental groups in Bulgaria. In Czechoslovakia, a group of young Czech mothers in Prague organized a protest in which they pushed their babies in carriages down some of Prague's main streets to protest the poisoning of the food supply by cancer-causing and toxic chemicals.

New feminist groups have formed in most of these countries. However, most are small, in urban areas, and have little support. With few exceptions, most women in the region have very little interest in feminism. Most of the new women's groups that have formed, in fact, are explicitly devoted to fostering women's domestic roles. However, at the same time that they deny that they are feminist, or, in many cases, political at all, many of these groups have sponsored actions that in fact are designed to improve women's qualifications, increase their knowledge of the current political and economic situation, or put pressure on public officials to resolve issues of special concern to women. By providing a space where women can meet to articulate and share their concerns, they may lead to recognition of common interests and to the development of feminist consciousness. They may also lead women to take more formal, organized action on their own behalf. Such actions are particularly likely in urban centres in which educated, intellectual women are most concentrated, for it is such women who form the bulk of those who are most interested in political affairs at present in these countries and who are most likely to develop an interest in feminism.

## Concepts of Women's Rights

*From "Democratization and Women's Movements: Concepts of Women's Rights," by Barbara Einhorn.*

The 1989 Revolutions in Eastern Europe have resulted in a total rejection of the past, and the wish to erase state socialist reality from the collective memory. This implies both a loss of identity and a degree of disorientation with regard to the future.

In relation to women's status and women's rights it entails the wholesale devaluing of state socialist legislation and social provision without regard for the fact that some elements of it may have been able to provide building blocks or stepping stones for attempts to identify women's needs in the current economic, political and social transformation process. The problem with denial of the state socialist legacy is that such attempts at definitions of women's needs and rights in the newly democratic societies of East Central Europe are beginning from scratch, as if, indeed, 1989 marked a hiatus after which history began afresh, without the encumbrance of memory, or of coming to terms with what went before.

With all of their limitations and contradictions, state socialist policies for the emancipation of women did mean that women's life experience on the two sides of the Cold War divide in Europe were very different. Women's labour force participation, however much it was perceived as an obligation imposed from the outside rather than a right exercised as the result of autonomous choice, did give women in East Central Europe a different vantage point, a lived reality and a consciousness from which it would have been, or perhaps still could be, possible to move forward in new directions in terms of defining the conditions for women's empowerment in the new united Europe.

Unfamiliar as the present political map of East Central Europe is, one thing seems clear. It would be mistaken to imagine that an unregulated market economy and an obsession with property rights could maximize women's welfare without an enormously enhanced set of institutionalized women's rights. The attainment of such rights however require new forms of state intervention, the very notion of which is anathema at the present time, tainted as it is by association by what was perceived as a totally and oppressively interventionist state in the past. Hence there are difficulties in putting such discussions on the agenda.

It is important to evaluate what went before, and to compare it with the actuality and potential of the current transition period in

East Central Europe in terms of women's rights and women's movements.

*Women's Rights and Gender Divisions under State Socialism*

One should distinguish carefully those elements of state socialist policy and practice which might be useful in conceptualizing and articulating what kinds of rights could empower women during and beyond the current transformation process. This is all the more so in view of the fact that previous studies of women's position in East Central Europe very often pointed to a level of legislative rights and social provision for women which in some respects seemed enviable from the perspective of Western feminists. The positive record notwithstanding, there were two fundamental kinds of problems with state socialism's handling of women's rights. The first was at the level of official discourse, in the limitations of the Marxist theoretical framework as it was adopted by those states. The second was at the level of implementation, namely that even within the terms of that theoretical framework, there was a gulf between legally enshrined rights for women and everyday reality as experienced by women in the socialist states of East Central Europe.

The state socialist interpretation of Marxian theories of women's emancipation focussed on economic rights. Taking a somewhat narrow view of the line of argument developed particularly by Engels and Bebel, and excluding the "heretical" questioning of the bourgeois family by Kollontai, led the socialist state to postulate that the necessary *and* sufficient condition for women's emancipation was her participation in social production and her consequent economic independence from men. The state socialist formulation of women's rights therefore focussed almost exclusively on rights such as the right to work, the right to equal pay for equal work, and a stress on the equal educational opportunities and the creation of social amenities -- especially childcare, but also workplace canteens and public laundries -- which would transform paper rights into reality. Official discourse also encouraged women to exercise their political rights by participating in political and public life.

What this focus excluded from the parameters of official discourse (albeit not entirely from the legislation) was the private sphere and the personal. This followed from the notion that individual endeavour should be subordinated to the collective good, namely the advancement of socialism, which in everyday practice meant the fulfilment of the current economic plan. Hence, neither issues of sexuality, autonomy, violence against women, nor the

domestic division of labour were subject to public scrutiny. This resulted in the much discussed double burden under which women laboured -- most of them working full-time outside the home, yet remaining responsible for the overwhelming majority of childcare and domestic labour.

Many studies of women in various state socialist countries have noted the fact that legislation on behalf of women was progressive, an expression of a more general commitment to the achievement of an egalitarian social order.<sup>32</sup> In the former GDR, the right to equal pay for equal work was contained in one of the early decrees of the Soviet Military Administration in 1946, whilst the 1950 Act for the Protection of Mother and Child predated comparable UN decrees and contained the elements of almost all subsequent legislation on behalf of women. In the case of state regulation of the private sphere, all the state socialist countries introduced abortion rights at some period in their history. GDR legislation came relatively late (in 1972) but contained a preamble which gave a nod in the direction of self-determination for women by conceding that they alone had the right to decide upon the number and timing of children they bore and on a termination of pregnancy as integral to that right.

Nor was the family exempt from legal regulation. It was defined as the smallest cell of society, with the duty of reproducing the labour force. Parents had a duty to rear their children as future socialist citizens. The GDR's Family Law of 1965 even stipulated that the marital partners should share equally the burdens of childcare and domestic labour, and that each partner should stand back during some period in order to facilitate the other partner's career development or enhancement. In the case of the GDR, therefore, it could be maintained that the socialist state did attempt to modify and recast traditional attitudes and family structures. The fact that the gendered domestic division of labour remained largely unchanged must be seen as in part influenced by the desire to maintain the family as a non-politicized sphere, in a form of passive resistance to what was perceived as an ubiquitous state presence.

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<sup>32</sup> Barbara Einhorn, "Socialist Emancipation: The Women's Movement in the GDR", in S. Kruks, R. Rapp, and M. Young (eds.), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989); J. Heinen, "The Impact of Social Policy on the Behaviour of Women Workers in Poland and East Germany", *Critical Social Policy*, Issue 29, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1990), pp. 79-91; M. Molyneux, "Socialist Societies Old and New: Progress Toward Women's Emancipation?", *Monthly Review* (July-August, 1982), pp. 65-100.

Emancipation for women in state socialist countries was defined primarily in terms of economic rights, and there was an impressive array of legislation which guaranteed their equality at the workplace, in education, in reproductive rights, especially in terms of maternity leave and childcare facilities. However, the implementation of these rights differed greatly between the countries of East Central Europe. In the former GDR in 1985, there were creche places available for 72.7 percent of all children under 3 and kindergarten places for 94 percent of 3-6 year olds. By contrast, there were creche places in Poland in the same year for only 5.1 percent and in Hungary for 14.4 percent of the under 3s, kindergarten places for 85 percent of the relevant age group in Hungary but never more than 50 percent in Poland.

In relation to maternity leave, all state socialist countries provided for a woman's job or an equivalent post to be held open for her to return to at the end of the leave. The length of optional childcare leave after the statutory maternity leave was increased to one (GDR) and even three years (Poland, Hungary) during the late 1970s and the 1980s in an attempt to boost the falling birth rate. In the second half of the 1980s the former GDR and Hungary even extended the right to take parental leave to fathers and/or grandmothers. The real differences between these countries lay in the level of material support to which a woman on extended childcare leave was entitled. In the case of Hungary, this was not high enough for many women to opt for the full three year period, while in Poland there was no financial support at all after the initial statutory maternity leave had elapsed. This meant that only in the former GDR with its fully paid baby year did reproductive rights and the level of childcare provision give women real choice over whether and when to have children, and when to re-enter the workforce after childbirth.

State socialist policies on education have meant an unrivalled level of education amongst women in East Central Europe. Women comprised around half of students enrolled in tertiary educational institutions. Indeed women's educational attainment as a result of the policy of equal educational opportunity was such that in the former GDR, a policy of positive discrimination for boys was introduced at the secondary school level in order to maintain an approximately 50/50 gender split amongst students entering tertiary education.

In Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia this achievement was qualified by problems for women deriving from the lack of a unified secondary education system. Although the great majority of girls completed secondary education, girls tended to opt for general secondary schools specializing in the humanities whereas boys opted for technical secondary schools. This meant that girls tended to enter the labour force unqualified, hence making up the majority

of unskilled workers on production lines, while boys had a vocational training by the time they left school. This skill differential laid the basis for the occupational segregation typical of those countries. In countries such as the GDR where a large number of women attended technical tertiary institutions and were highly qualified in traditionally male-dominated professions such as engineering, the process of economic restructuring with its concomitant enterprise closures and job redefinitions will result in deskilling for a large number of women unless adequate levels and types of retraining courses are introduced.

Women were concentrated in certain industrial branches such as light industry and textiles, in retail and services, as opposed to the heavy industrial branches which were prioritized in terms of wages and investment. They also tended to be confined to a limited number of occupations. Young women continued to choose traditionally female occupations.<sup>33</sup>

In summary, it must be conceded that women's rights enjoyed a place high on the agenda of state socialism. With all of the contradictions inherent in the state's handling of these rights, they did create a basis for building on. What is interesting in the current situation is how the new democratic political parties and governments have dealt with this legacy. For the moment, however, it appears that they have disappeared altogether from the political agenda of the new democratic parties and governments in East Central Europe.

### *Democratization and Women's Political Representation*

What is striking about the first democratically elected parliaments and governments of the former state socialist countries of East Central Europe is the relative invisibility of women in them. From an average 33 percent representation in pre-1989 state socialist parliaments, women now hold an average 10 percent of parliamentary seats. Female shares are 13 percent of deputies to the Sejm and 6 percent of senators in Poland; 7.2 percent seats in the Hungarian parliament; 8.5 percent in the Bulgarian National Assembly. There is only one woman minister, the General Auditor, in the Czechoslovak Federal Government, but no Minister for Women's Affairs. In Poland there was one woman minister, for Culture, until the government reshuffle of December 1990. And the Polish Plenipotentiary for Women's Affairs, a post at deputy ministerial level, has been both transmuted into Government

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<sup>33</sup> H-M. Nickel, "Frauen in der DDR" (Women in the GDR), in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (Beilage zur Wochenzeitung *Das Parlament*, B 16-17, 1990).

Plenipotentiary for Women and Youth, and moved sideways from the Ministry for Labour and Welfare to the Prime Minister's Office. In the former GDR, the post of Government Spokesperson for Women's Affairs was abruptly abolished and Dr. Marina Beyer, its incumbent, was summarily made redundant in late September 1990 on the eve of German Unification.

There are various ways of interpreting this absolute numerical drop in women's representation. In past studies and present political commentary it has been common practice to assert that the ostensibly or at least numerically impressive level of female representation in the pre-1989 parliaments of East Central Europe was mere tokenism, achieved by the allocation of fixed quotas to the official women's organizations and quotas for women within the political parties and mass organizations. Further, it was pointed out that the parliaments were not the real decision-making bodies and that women were conspicuous by their absence from the Politburos and held very low numbers of seats in the Central Committees of the various Communist Parties. Another view is that indeed there has been an absolute fall in women's representation, and that this is all the more striking in view of women's key role in the dissident groups whose activities helped to prepare the way for the "revolutions" of 1989. Jirina Siklova points out that 18 percent of Charter 77 signatories and 31 percent of its spokespersons were women and comments bitterly: "When we were dissidents, the men needed us and treated us well". Other analysts have pointed to this break in relation to the Hungarian situation, where women activists provided a large part of the core in the Dialogue peace group and the environmental group which organized publicity and demonstrations against the proposed Danube Dam, both of which were instrumental in the democratization process.<sup>34</sup>

Were women more politically active under state socialism than within the newly democratic structures, and if so, why? Why did they fail to take advantage of the new openings embodied by the creation of new political parties and the first democratic elections? Is their rejection of political involvement part of the general negation of what is seen as the overly politicized past of the state socialist regime, or have they been pushed aside by the men, as Siklova suggests? Have they been paralysed by the

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<sup>34</sup> J. Siklova, "Feminism, Post-Feminism, Sexism, and Women's Studies in Czechoslovakia", *Maxima* (Prague), 4/1990; J. Siklova, "Male Democracies, Female Dissidents", an interview with Ruth Rosen, *Tikkun*, vol. 5, no. 6 (1990), pp. 11-12, 100-101; Z. Beres, "A Thousand Words on Hungarian Women" (mimeo, 1991); Z. Beres, "Hungary in Transition: The Ecological Issue" (mimeo, 1991); C. Corrin, "Hungarian Women's Experience of Change", in C. Corrin (ed.), *Women's Experience of Change in the Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Pinter [forthcoming] 1991).

overwhelming economic pressures of the current transition process, or is their political passivity akin to their political stance within the stifling constraints of state socialism?

I would suggest five explanations operating at the present time. First, the question of tokenism aside, women undoubtedly were more politically active under state socialism, especially at the regional government, local council and school board levels, where their representation was high. This may be a source of inspiration for future women activists. Second, this past political involvement itself can be seen as a partial source of the current lack of political activism on the part of women. It represents in part a rejection of the pressure imposed on them by the state socialist regimes to take on positions of social or political responsibility in addition to their labour force participation and responsibility for the major part of domestic labour. Third, there is an element of truth in the interpretation that women have been pushed aside. All but one of the leaders of Civic Forum are men, and Civic Forum has no specific policy dealing with women's rights or women's needs in the current transition process. Nor are women politicians necessarily interested in defending women's rights.

None of the Hungarian political parties has a policy on women, with the brief exception of the Free Democrats (SZDSZ) with its short-lived women's group and last-minute pre-1990 general election statement on women. There is a view expressed by male politicians in all of these countries that alongside the pressing and grave problems of economic transformation, unemployment, inflation, talk of women's rights is at best of secondary importance, at worst a luxury or a non-necessity. A positive step in the Polish case has been taken by a cross-party group of women politicians in forming the first ever Parliamentary Club of Women Deputies under the chair of Barbara Labuda. They see their function as monitoring women's interests and pressing for their inclusion in new legislation being passed by the Polish Sejm.<sup>35</sup>

The fourth element in explaining women's apparent non-involvement in formal politics is the obvious one of lack of time. Women have less leisure time at their disposal than men as a result of the double burden of full-time labour force participation and responsibility for 80 percent of domestic labour, combined with the time spent in queueing for goods in a shortage economy and gaining access to scarce services. In the present transition period it is becoming evident that the difficulties of providing for the family in the economic hardship represented by unemployment, steeply rising prices, and slashed subsidies, are once again falling on women. Finally, it is not surprising if after years of enduring the

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<sup>35</sup> B. Labuda, Interview with B. Einhorn, Warsaw (June 1991).

hard life imposed by the double burden within a shortage economy, and of viewing their right to work as an economic necessity in terms of the income needed to support the family or a state-imposed obligation, women breathe a sigh of relief at the possibility of relegation to the domestic sphere, preferring to leave politics to their menfolk. The ideology of the present moment includes the oft-voiced opinion that politics is men's prerogative in a return to a "natural order" in which women have primacy in the home, and men in the public sphere.

*Ideology and the Role of the Family: Shifts in the Public/Private Boundary?*

The specific role of the private sphere in East Central Europe and its demarcation from the public sphere indicates a profound basis of difference with Western feminist analysis in which precisely the public/private split has been identified as a key source of gender inequalities. Hence there have been campaigns to break down the public/private dichotomy. The women's movement slogan that "the personal is political" has had concrete results in forcing the state via its agencies such as the judiciary and the police, to recognize and intervene to regulate cases of violence against women which occur behind closed doors in the hitherto sacrosanct sphere of "domestic disputes".

Far from questioning the public/private dichotomy, the state socialist system had the effect of entrenching this divide, with the private sphere being idealized along classical 19th century liberal lines as the source of individual autonomy. The assignation of positive value to the private sphere also provides some explanation as to why women in East Central Europe are not protesting a return to the family as both implicit in economic restructuring with its concomitant need to shed labour and explicitly propounded by the new state and Church-led ideologies.

The new ideology holds that women now have the freedom to "choose" full-time motherhood (or, in effect, at this juncture in time, unemployment -- the choice of terminology being also optional and ideology-influenced). Women's reaction to being made redundant is further dulled by their relief at being able to shed, for a time at least, the burden of their double shift. This relief contributes to the current popularity, expressed in a recent Soviet opinion survey, or as espoused by the Hungarian Free Democrats (SZDSZ), of the notion of the "family wage". It is difficult for women in the former state socialist countries to accept the idea that Western women's "choice" to stay home is in fact mitigated for many by the necessity, familiar to women in state socialist countries, for a second income to support the family. In a similar vein, they tend to idealize the choice to work part-time or at home,

a view which overlooks the frequently exploitative and/or unprotected conditions of such work in Western Europe.

Women's return to the family is occurring in a context of the general retreat of the state from social (welfare) provision. Concretely, this means for women that once they become unemployed and therefore lose their right to a childcare place, finding a new job becomes objectively more difficult. Indeed there is a vicious circle whereby it is difficult to find a job without being readily available to start work, which a woman cannot achieve without a childcare place, to which she is not entitled unless she has a job. Devolution of state responsibility for childcare provision onto individual enterprises struggling to survive in the marketplace means that in the attempt to cut costs they tend to shed workplace nurseries and creches as "optional extras". In the former GDR and in Hungary, enterprises have passed these facilities over to the local authorities, themselves virtually bankrupt and unable to take them on. As a result many childcare facilities have already been closed down and there are fears that this will become more widespread. With the simultaneous removal of the massive subsidies which meant that childcare was free with the exception of a tiny nominal fee for the hot meals children were given at midday, there is thus a dual process at work which results in childcare being both less available and priced out of reach. As early as 1990 there were reports in Poland of women "voluntarily" giving up their jobs since they could no longer afford the childcare fees, especially for more than one child.

Ironically, therefore, it appears as though the very rights women did enjoy under state socialism are now operating against their interests. An example is the several weeks of paid leave available to parents -- in practice overwhelmingly taken by mothers -- to care for sick children, which is now being cited by employers as a justification for women, as "unreliable" workers, being the first to be made redundant.

The current pressures on women to give up labour force participation and return to primary responsibility for the family are both economic and ideological. Equally it is obvious that this move is both a reaction against the right to work which was experienced as an obligation imposed by the state, and at the same time represents in some senses an unbroken continuity in women's role which links earlier historical eras both with the state socialist period and with the current transition. It will be interesting to see for how long women accept it. Female commentators in Czechoslovakia and the GDR suggest that women will wish to continue their labour force participation; indeed that is an integral part of their self-definition. An autumn 1991 television documentary on the NARVA lamp factory in East Berlin appears to

confirm this, with a woman worker who has been made redundant stating that working gave her a "sense of worth".

Women are viewed by conservative parties and the church alike in several East Central European countries as the guardians of traditional morality, entrusted with the sacred duty of bearing children "for the nation" and rearing them in the spirit of national identity and ethical virtue. This sense of an ethnic and cultural heritage to be retrieved after the period of state socialism has deeply affected current views of women's role in this renewal, sometimes appearing to instrumentalize them in the name of nationalism. It also provides one explanation for the almost universal attack on abortion rights.

### *Reproductive Rights*

Control over one's own body and autonomous power of decision-making about fertility has always been regarded as one of the central planks in campaigns for women's rights.

The availability of contraception in the countries of state socialism varied greatly. In the former GDR, although there was little choice, contraceptives (mainly the pill) were free and readily available to all women over the age of 16, regardless of marital status. In Poland and the Soviet Union, abortion was used as a method of contraception because contraceptive means were unevenly and irregularly available. Both Western and Eastern studies show that women undergo abortion as a last resort. The right to terminate a pregnancy by means of a legal abortion was also variable in the countries of state socialism. The 1956 Hungarian law sought to protect women's health from the threat embodied in illegal abortions; a 1973 regulation enforced compulsory counselling. But although Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Hungary did liberalize their abortion provisions in the years 1956-57, several of them either from the outset, or at a later stage as part of natalist policies designed to raise the birthrate, provided only for limited admissibility of abortion. Romanian strictures against contraception and abortion, and the pressure on women to produce children, have been well publicized.

One of the striking features of the current transition period is that in virtually every country in East Central Europe, women's previously legitimized right to decide on a termination of pregnancy is under threat in quite virulent terms. Posters in Croatia and inflammatory statements by church dignitaries such as Joseph Höffner, Cardinal of Cologne, Cardinal Glemp of Poland, and most recently Pope Paul II himself on his April 1991 visit to Poland have

equated abortion with the holocaust.<sup>36</sup> This equation goes much further than simply denying women the right to decide or for their health to be protected. It implies not only that women are morally irresponsible, but in an extension suggests that they are united in an international campaign of genocide.

Current legislation legalizing abortion is under discussion in Hungary, where the wish of the Christian Democratic Party (the smallest partner in the ruling coalition government which controls the Ministry of Health) to modify the abortion law, led to the collection of petitions by the newly formed Hungarian Feminist Network in August 1990. Abortion has been described as "at present, the number one women's social issue" in Czechoslovakia.

In Germany, there was a short period during 1990 when completion of German unification itself appeared to hang on the abortion issue. The two German laws were diametrically opposed. The 1975 Federal law, the so-called paragraph 218, makes abortion fundamentally illegal, with certain exceptions, while the 1972 East German law provides for legal abortions on the woman's decision alone within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. A 1991 opinion poll showed that 55 percent of West Germans and 75 percent of East Germans favour either total legalization of abortion or the extension of the twelve week regulation to all of Germany.

Christian Democrat assurances that a ban on abortion would be accompanied by generous state provision to ease the burden of bearing and rearing children look set to founder on the strained state coffers of post-unification Germany. Federal Finance Minister Waigel, who also heads the arch-conservative Bavarian CSU, stated his refusal to fund the social package agreed by the CDU/CSU and the FDP as part of the unification treaty. This social package provides for the pill to be free on prescription, for an increase in child allowance, and the right to a kindergarten place. All of these measures, but particularly the latter, would involve billions of marks of investment, since the 100 percent kindergarten place availability in the former GDR has already been diminished by kindergarten closures and provision in the former Federal Republic was always catastrophically lacking. Women's Minister Angela Merkel estimates a shortfall in kindergarten places of 600,000. Without the package of social measures, it is felt likely that the Constitutional Court would reject proposals to modify Paragraph 218 in the terms of a GDR-style "limited term"

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<sup>36</sup> R. Rosen, "Women and Democracy in Czechoslovakia: An Interview with Jirina Siklova", *Peace and Democracy News*, 3-4 (Fall 1990), pp. 35-38; *Der Spiegel* no. 20/1991 on the German abortion debate; Corrin, *op.cit.*

legalization of abortion. Ironically, the budgetary constraints might result in the indefinite extension of the present dual law system.<sup>37</sup>

In Poland, a Church-sponsored new draft law in June 1989 would have banned abortion with no exceptions whatsoever and provided for a three year prison term for the woman and the doctor involved in performing the abortion. This sparked off mass demonstrations in the summer of 1989 and the creation of several grassroots groups devoted to opposing the anti-abortion draft in the name of women's rights or democratic civil liberties. The terms of the proposed draft were in fact rejected as too draconian by the Polish Senate and the bill was sent back for redrafting. The second draft of the proposed anti-abortion law providing for some very few exceptions was under consideration by the Polish Sejm in the spring of 1991. Opinion surveys made it clear that the population was almost evenly divided over the issue, but that a majority opposed the criminalization of abortion. There were many reports of Church pressure, especially at village level, including threats to withhold a Christian burial from parishioners who favoured maintaining the existing law. Such pressure is held responsible for the skewing of figures especially on the number of women who expressed the view that abortion is a crime.<sup>38</sup>

Efforts are currently being made by an international organization, Est a Venir, in collaboration with the Polish Ministry for Health and a wide spectrum of women's groups, to introduce sex education into Polish schools, to reopen Family Planning Clinics, and to import and make available on a large scale both contraceptives and contraceptive information.

The recently formed Parliamentary Club of Women in the Polish Sejm plans to have abortion included in the Penal Code, in a formulation similar to that in the existing Federal German law. This would make abortion fundamentally illegal, but with a set of precisely defined circumstances in which it could be legally performed. Barbara Labuda, President of the Women's Parliamentary Club, saw this approach as a realistic compromise and the only possible variant to a total ban likely to be accepted in the Sejm. Meanwhile the Catholic Church opposed a plebiscite being held on the issue, knowing that it would be lost, claiming that moral and ethical issues cannot be subject to political decisions. For the moment, the issue has been shelved by the Sejm, with the outcome uncertain.

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<sup>37</sup> *Der Spiegel* 32/1991.

<sup>38</sup> M. Fuszara, "Will the Abortion Issue Give Birth to Feminism in Poland?" (1991).

## *Women's Movements*

The Women's Leagues, Councils and Unions of the past were allegedly mass movements, but in practice they were bureaucratized semi-governmental organizations. It would be mistaken to suppose, however, that they had no popular support whatever. The activities of their network of local groups were well supported, particularly in country areas where they formed a focus for women's social and educational activity. Formed in the early post-World War II period with its acute labour shortages, their initial purpose was to encourage women's labour force participation. In addition they provided educational courses aimed at broadening women's political horizons, and others of a more practical nature, for example on homemaking. In addition they were in many cases responsible for formulating much of the early legislation on behalf of women. In later years their fixed quota of seats in the state socialist parliaments enabled them to monitor the implementation of women's rights in practice, both at the administrative and workplace level.

Retrospective evaluation of their role has shown them in a relatively negative light. They have been sufficiently discredited as regards both their structures and their activities to render their attempts at a continued albeit ostensibly "reformed" existence as doomed as those of the former Communist parties. Most of the reasons for the rejection of these organizations and the refusal to work with them by newly formed women's groups stem from their past activities, the general feeling being that their activities were misdirected and irrelevant to the defence or promotion of women's rights.

The acting president of the Czechoslovak League in September 1990, like the president of the Polish League in May 1991, asserted in interview that they wished to work democratically in cooperation with new grassroots women's organizations in the new pluralistic political landscape, and in defence of women's rights. The latter mistrust their intentions, especially in view of the fact that the Leagues still appear to have access to considerable financial resources, in stark contrast to the tiny grassroots groups, and to manipulate power through control of their still existing country-wide network of local groups.

The newly formed grassroots democratic women's groups have problems of their own. On the one hand the new democratic rights and the space to organize mean that there is every opportunity for self-definition and spontaneous organization. Nor is there a shortage of issues around which to mobilize, as the sections above have indicated. Yet the reality is that far from becoming a mass movement, the new groups have remained tiny minority

groups. This is true even in the case of Poland, where the draft anti-abortion law brought masses onto the streets and the debate still rages. Yet the activists of Pro Femina, one of the main groups formed to defend women's right to choose, are few in number, weary and discouraged. A similar "burn out" after being thrust into activism on the abortion issue very shortly after it was founded is obvious amongst the members of the Hungarian Feminist Network.

In the former GDR, a huge number of women's groups, across a wide spectrum, with many of them explicitly feminist and several of them having a countrywide network, formed the Independent Women's Association (UFV) as an umbrella and pressure group at a meeting attended by over one thousand women and in a spirit of euphoric optimism in December 1989. By March 1991, the tremendous pressure of events around unification, the total loss of identity this implied for the whole country and the individuals in it, together with the shock of unemployment and uncertainty about the future, had left the UFV at their annual conference a relatively small group, riven with internal dissent, accused of being too intellectual and arrogant, too removed from the anxieties about the future of women factory workers for example, or older women made redundant long before retirement but with no hope of finding new employment.

The majority of the new groups in the countries of East Central Europe do not characterize themselves as feminist, indeed they explicitly reject such an identification. This is true for example of Prague Mothers, a group formed with the explicit aim of protesting environmental pollution in Prague in the name of their children's health. In Hungary, the Feminist Network debated long on the question of what to call themselves when they were constituted in June 1990, deciding on the ultimate choice of "Hungarian Feminist Network" for the rather negative reason that "feminist" was one of the few words not used by and hence not tainted by association with the previous regime.

One of the reasons for this widespread "allergy to feminism" is a false identification of feminism with state socialist policies for women, now rejected as comprising what was perceived as the obligation to work and resulting double burden, both felt to have been imposed from above without consultation with women themselves. In addition, the simplistic view that Western feminism is a form of warfare against men is contrasted with the view, widely held amongst dissidents in the 1970s and 1980s for example, that the "us" pitted in defence of their civil rights against the "them" of the state were oppressed women and men in a community of shared interests. And with the exception of limited access to Western feminist texts in the former GDR and Yugoslavia, rejection of Western feminism was based, as the Czech

sociologist Hana Navarova points out, on virtually total ignorance of that movement's multiplicity and debates.<sup>39</sup>

The position of the new women's movement in East Central Europe at this moment in time is not strong. On the one hand they are operating in an environment which appears either oblivious to the need for defending women's rights or openly inimical to aspirations for women's autonomy and self-determination. On the other, the material pressures of economic transformation mitigate against mass activist involvement. A third element in their current status as tiny minority groups lies in their having been prematurely thrown into activism in defence of women's right to choose on the question of abortion. This instant activism had the effect of bypassing a more gradual process of self-definition of these groups, of their aims and strategies. For this reason it would be wrong to interpret the present relative retreat from activism, for example into activities such as the translation and dissemination of Western feminist texts, as a sign of defeat. Rather it should be seen as a period of reflection, creating space for the redefinition of women's needs and the conditions for women's empowerment in the new democracies, as well as the reorientation of strategies for women's groups within that context.

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<sup>39</sup> H. Navarova, "What Did Socialism Give to Women?" (mimeo, 1990).

## APPENDIX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**Gender and Restructuring: Perestroika, the 1989 Revolutions, and Women.**  
2-3 September 1991, WIDER, Helsinki.

IRENEUSZ BIALECKI (Polskiej Akademiik Nauk, Warsaw) and  
BARBARA HEYNS (New York University/Warsaw University)  
*Educational Attainment, the Status of Women and the Private School Movement in Poland.*

VALENTINA BODROVA (National Center of Public Opinion, Moscow)  
*Women, Work and Family in the Mirror of Public Opinion.*

BARBARA EINHORN (University of Sussex)  
*Democratization and Women's Movements in East Central Europe: Concepts of Women's Rights.*

MONICA FONG (The World Bank, Washington D.C.)  
*Women's Economic Status in the Restructuring of Eastern Europe.*

KAISA KAUPPINEN-TOROPAINEN (Inst. of Occupational Health, Helsinki)  
*Work Satisfaction and Work Commitment Among Women: Research Findings from Estonia and the Moscow Area.*

DOBRINKA KOSTOVA (Institute of Syndicate and Social Research, Sofia)  
*The Transition to Democracy in Bulgaria: Challenges and Risks for Women.*

DAVID LANE (Emmanuel College, Cambridge), *Discussant.*

GAIL LAPIDUS (University of California, Berkeley)  
*Gender and Restructuring: The Impact of Perestroika on Soviet Women.*

VALENTINE MOGHADAM (UNU/WIDER, Helsinki)  
*Gender and Restructuring: A Comparative Analysis of the Third World Industrializing Countries and the Former State Socialist Systems.*

LIBA PAUKERT (ILO, Geneva)  
*The Changing Economic Status of Women in the Period of Transition to a Market Economy System: The Case of Czechoslovakia After 1989.*

ANASTASIA POSADSKAYA (Center for Gender Analysis, Moscow)  
*Changes in Gender Discourses and Policies.*

DOROTHY ROSENBERG (Mount Holyoke College, MA, USA), *Discussant.*

MARILYN RUESCHEMEYER (Brown University, Providence, R.I.)  
*German Unification and the Status of GDR Women.*

GORDON WEIL (Wheaton College, Norton, MA)  
*Economic Reform and Women: A General Framework with Specific Reference to Hungary.*

SHARON WOLCHIK (George Washington University, Washington, DC)  
*Women and the Politics of Transition in Central and Eastern Europe.*

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