

WOMAN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Struggle

ISSUE NO. 52, FEBRUARY 1987

WAR ON SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN

Since the State of Emergency imposed in South Africa on June 12, 1986 more than 8,000 black children, most between the ages of 9 and 18 have been detained (i.e about 250 per week). Hundreds are kept in police stations for a few days, abused, interrogated about their friends, beaten up and then released. Many have been tortured, sent to "reeducation camp" where they are held for days or weeks without their parents knowledge of their whereabouts. Some have "gone missing" and others killed.

A document, A Memorandum on Children Under Repression, released in November, 1986 by the Detainees Parents Support Committee states that children have become "prime targets" of various types of repression. School children are policed on the school premises. For example, an affidavit filed by the president of the Western Cape Teachers' Union states, "in Bonteheuwel (near Cape Town) schools are daily occupied by security forces armed with rifles in attendance all the time. School attendance and class lessons are being enforced at gunpoint and numbers of children who are off the school grounds with the permission of their parents and principals have been arrested simply because they were on the streets and not at school. Children have also been victims of vigilante violence such as grenade attacks on the homes of activists.

The fate of young detainees may no longer be reported under South Africa's latest censorship laws.

Outwrite

Issue 55 February, 1987

NEWSBRIEFS ON DOMESTIC WORKERS

South Africa's one million domestic workers, the most exploited workers under apartheid have a union. The 50,000 strong SA Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) is made up of six major domestic worker organizations from throughout the country. Demands include laws to protect their rights, maternity benefits, a minimum wage, holiday and sick pay and overtime.

Meanwhile, in China a growing phenomenon is the influx of peasant girls into urban areas looking for work as domestic live-in maids. The growing demand for such workers indicates a change of heart on the part of government which would have disapproved the practice in the past. Since 1983, 24 agencies have been established to regulate and protect the rights of both employer and employee. However, a 'free market' has developed as the agencies are incapable of keeping up with the demand. Young women go to the major cities and wait in public areas for potential employers to approach them. There is no control over contracts or conditions.

Outwrite

Issue 55 February 1987

ANTI COMMUNIST SQUAD THREATENS FEMINIST JOURNALIST

The Chilean Anti Communist Action group (ACHA) has made threats on the life of Viviana Erazo co-founder of FEMPRESS, the Latin-American feminist news agency and journal. The death squad has carried out numerous murders and Chilean feminists ask that letters showing concern be sent to the Ministry of the Interior, Santiago Chile.

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Issue 55, February 1987

BRITISH CAMPAIGN PROTESTS MATERNITY LAWS

Cuts in maternity benefits for British women under the Social Security Act have prompted a new Maternity Emergency campaign under the umbrella of the Maternity Alliance. The campaign is bringing together "mothers, fathers and all those who support a fairer deal for British parents" for a mass rally in London on April 6.

On that date major changes in maternity benefits, set out in the Social Security Act will come into force. The Maternity Emergency Campaign has drawn attention to the effects on these changes particularly on young mothers.

"Nearly 4 out of 10 births in England and Wales are to a mother under the age of 25. High youth unemployment, low wages and poor housing provision for young people put these mothers and babies at particular risk of poverty and ill health."

The campaign charges that maternity benefits have never been a high priority in Britain and the existing benefits system whittled away in recent years by successive governments. One example, the maternity grant has not been increased since 1969 while single payments for maternity items paid to families on supplementary benefit were cut back in 1986.

Cuts in benefits due in April will undermine women's positions still further. The universal £25 maternity grant is to be abolished and replaced by a meanstested payment for mothers on supplementary benefit or family income supplement. The new Statutory Maternity Pay, which replaces the existing maternity allowance will be paid by employers to women who have worked with them continuously for at least the first six months of pregnancy. Young women may find it difficult to claim from their employer.

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Issue 55 February, 1987

BRAZILIAN POLICE REPORT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

BRAZIL: Late last year representatives from 26 police stations which specialise in dealing with cases of violence against women, had their second national meeting in Brasilia. During 1985, the stations gave assistance to 14,183 women. From January to May 1986, 4,850 cases of injury due to battering were registered, 2,340 threats of beating, 573 rapes, 17 cases of femicide and 42 kidnappings. Data also shows that 95% of the most serious attacks take place in the home.

Outwrite

Issue 55, February 1987

INDIAN MAGAZINE EXPRESSES DOUBTS ABOUT NEW LAW

The first piece of legislation prohibiting indecent representation of women through advertisements for publications, writings, paintings or in any other manner, has recently been passed by the Indian Parliament, but not without opposition.

The indecent Representation of Women Bill, 1986, has already been characterised by some as vague, amateurish and a law which will prove difficult to implement. Rather, what it will in all probability do, is cause further repression by enabling government officials to abuse the license for censorship that the Bill will offer. Manushi, an Indian women's magazine comments, 'The law really has nothing to do with the problem and has no impact on it. Instead, it ends up being used to nullify the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution'.

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