

INTRODUCTION

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM

"SOLIDARITY IN THE GREENHOUSE"

The signs of global warming hardly make their way into the air-conditioned ICC - building for the UN Climate Conference. According to 'business as usual' the government delegations continued heading towards the climate catastrophe in spite of floodings, tornadoes and other climate-related catastrophes. In the face of this irresponsible destruction of nature the atmosphere heated up, the waves mounted and storms of indignation raged through the "House of the Cultures of the World" (Haus der Kulturen der Welt). In order to practice 'Solidarity in the Greenhouse' 200 women from 25 countries met on April 1 - 2, 1995, among them women from Japan, the USA, the Netherlands, Belarus, Brazil, Kenya, Thailand, the Philippines and Jamaica. In the tradition of women's activities prior to and during the UN-Environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro 1992, the initiative 'Women for Peace and Ecology' initialized the only broadly-based women-political event during the climate summit, despite extremely limited possibilities of personnel, finance and infrastructure.

Women worldwide are underrepresented on the state- and non-state decision-making levels in politics, economics, and science, but also in environmental associations. Yet, the majority of them (us) are responsible for survival in everyday life. This definitely raises the importance, that with the International Women's Forum women are creating space for themselves, in which they - from their specific concerns and experiences - are exchanging their varied experiences and knowledge and develop common possibilities of action and feminist visions for the future. With a view to the Women's Conference in Beijing '95 female experts from the spheres of politics, sciences, the media and the women's and environmental movement discussed in four fora and a final panel discussion aspects of feminist environmental policy in the areas of energy, traffic- and urban-planning, empowerment (encouraging self-determination) of women as well as the contexts of sustainable development, changes of lifestyle and the unfair economic world order. They offered alternatives to the dominating technocratic and destructive understandings of nature, technology, progress, welfare etc. in order to get ahead on the climate discussion.

Since we only had limited space as a result of lacking financial means, we had to reduce the four forums to half a day for each. Sometimes there was a great desire to discuss the numerous interesting contributions after the forum. During the breaks and in one of the evenings at a reception, to which the senator for 'work and women' of Berlin, Dr. Christine Bergmann invited the participants, there was further discussion within a smaller circle. This provided a good possibility for the women to intensify their contacts and to build new ones to other women involved in similar projects, in order to further a long-term dialogue and in order to strengthen the international networking of the women's and environmental movements.

We could for example organise a follow-up of our conference for young women mainly from Central- and Eastern European countries, together with A SEED in November 1995 in Nijmegen, Holland, which lasted for 5 days. The documentation can be ordered at the A SEED office.

"Solidarity in the Greenhouse" found a lot of attention in the media. Apart from radio and television-broadcasts, it was commented upon predominately in the local and super-regional daily press as well as in specialised journals. Thus the context between environment and development on the one hand and issues of violence and women's issues on the other was pointed out, together with the fact that feminist contributions have to be inserted into the environment-political agenda as an integral part. From the event emerged an open letter to the German environmental minister and president of the first meeting of the contract-nations of the framework-convention, Angela Merkel, as well as a paper on the current position in which the ten primary demands for the UN-Climate convention, the German non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have signed at the forum Environment and Development, and

the demands by women were broadened.

(This was distributed at the climate-summit and was personally submitted to Angela Merkel. At an invitation to all NGO-representatives of Angela Merkel the topic of women and climate was discussed by Claire Greensfelder and Angela Merkel was taking position to it.)

With numerous governmental and non-governmental funding organisations we had to experience that the socially necessary work of women's projects is even today not recognised as a fixed and unrenouncable part of cultural, social and political life. Four weeks before the event we only had 2 000 DM to dispose of. The insufficient financial support burdened us with an enormous uncertainty in planning ahead and unnecessarily consumed a lot of time, energy and working-power, which was very much at the cost of the real project work and our dedication to our activity. On this background, we were especially happy about some spontaneous financial support, which did create an unproportional administrative effort, but finally created a broader scope for planning.

For this support we would like to say thank you to the AStA, TU Berlin (the Student's Union of the Technical University of Berlin), ABP - Ausschuß für entwicklungsbezogene Bildung und Publizistik, Bildungswerk für Demokratie und Umweltschutz, Union Fraktion Bündnis 90/Grüne/UFV, Goldrausch - Frauennetzwerk, Umverteilen - Stiftung für eine, solidarische Welt.

We would like to thank very much the speakers and all others that have contributed their experiences, their commitment and their expertise to the success of the event, for the pleasant and fruitful collaboration.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CLIMATE DISCUSSION

The destruction of nature and the existence-threatening change of climate is within a direct context of overexploitation of resources and the growing unequal resource distribution between the centre (the industrialised countries) and the periphery (the so-called developing countries) as well as between the rich and the poor sections in the respective countries. This is accompanied by an increase in direct and structural violence, which runs through macro-relations between the centre and the periphery up to the micro-relations between the individual people. What, however, has environment and development to do with violence and women's questions?

Women's work plays a crucial role in sustaining society. Up until now it is usually women who care for health, intellectual and emotional development of the children and other people in need of protection. All over the world it is women who work for the basis of living for themselves and their families. In the so-called developing countries most of the food production is in the hands of women. According to the UN, 2/3 of all work in the world is done by women. But their wages are only 1/10 of the world's income and they control only 1/100 of the means of production. Women produce - often for free or very low-paid - large amounts of cheap raw-material and workers. They thus deliver in unpaid work the conditions for industrial production and the squandering affluence of the rich sections of the population in the metropolises, who are primarily responsible for the destruction of nature.

Through the increasing impoverishment, desertification and swamping of whole regions and islands women are being violated. It burdens them with additional strains at the performance of their daily tasks, robs them off their basis for living and leads them in the future into ever more poverty, hunger and refuge.

Already today women and children represent over 80% of the 100 millions of refugees, according to UNO and Amnesty International (ai). Women often flee in accompaniment of children, elderly and other people in need of protection which means that they have an additional burden with this. Furthermore, they are very vulnerable during their flight, because often they are exposed to sexual violence without any protection. Overexploitation of nature reduces in the long run the health and the quality of life of all people and endangers their existence everywhere. At first

this is, however, targeting always poor people in all societies for they cannot escape into the 'ecological niches' as the rich can afford to do. They have to purchase cheap food, which often has a higher level of harmful substances. They live near factories, nuclear plants and main traffic roads, in coalmining areas and in slums because flats are cheaper in these areas. The fact that 70% of the 1.3 milliards of people living in abject poverty are women was only emphasised by the UN General Secretary Butros Butros-Ghali in his opening speech at the Social Summit in Copenhagen.

The destruction of nature is burdening women as the main providers in societies everywhere (in different ways) additional strains of the accomplishments of daily duties; be it in the countries of the industrialized North or the economically poor countries of the South. It is women as food producers which are targeted specifically in the so-called developing countries, when climate change is advancing desertification and the agrarian supplies are breaking down. They have to walk ever larger distances in order to obtain drinking water and food. It is the women in the industrialised countries, of whom greater affection is being expected, when the possibilities of recreation of the children are narrowing down, for example, when children cannot play outside because of smog in summer and thus have to be engaged indoors. Women sacrifice more time to accompany their children on their way to school or in their sparetime and thus protecting them against the dangers of increasing traffic. In this society as well as elsewhere they are responsible to organise uncontaminated food for their children.

Equally, women spend more time in the waitingrooms of doctors' practices and hospitals when children and old people feel acutely sick more often, because the level of pollutants in the air is on the increase or when increasing global warming is facilitating the spreading of sicknesses and diseases.

The time and energy which women lose by coping with the immediate requirements of daily life is going amiss for other important matters like their jobs and their own interests. The unequal societal divisions of labour between men and women is thus being continued.

However, women are not only victims of the destruction of nature. They are participating in it. Out of their responsibility for contemporary and future generations they, however, possess a highly developed environmental consciousness, for example when going shopping, at food preparation, at the recycling of waste and in traffic. It is them who cushion (without charge) the damages done by the economy. It is for example women who are carrying the 'green-belt movement' in Kenya and who are carrying out voluntarily reforestation-programmes. The decision-makers in politics and economics are deliberately delegating their responsibility to the environmental conscience of women, for example by neglecting preventive environmental protection, women have to clean up the mess afterwards.

Energy-saving measurements, separation of waste and other appeals in favour of the protection of the climate are predominantly addressing the consumers and are aiming at an ecological management of the household. This is still for the most part done by women. Instead of seriously eliminating the causes of the destruction of nature, the predominantly male decision-makers in politics and economics misuse the initiative of women and thus can divert themselves from their own responsibility for the destruction of nature. By making women from the economically poor countries and population-sections responsible for the increase in population, they are even declaring them guilty for poverty and the destruction of nature.

Women are carrying - next to the children - the effects of the irresponsible environmental policy in a special way. Nevertheless, they can only randomly participate at the decisions on a national level and the influential toplayers of the economy. Even in environmental associations women are insufficiently represented at a decision-making level. However, without the knowledge from their experience and their expertise, no effective and future orientated global environmental policy can go under way. For this a real solidarity between North and South, West and East is required as well as a vehement support of women which will advance their equality, that is, access to land, credits, training, health care etc. And women have to be able to organise themselves in order to exchange their different experiences and knowledge as well as to develop perspectives for the future and strategies for action.

As affected people they have to be able to bring their standpoints into the public discussion on an equal level and to participate at political decision-making processes. Especially women from economically poor countries and population-sections have to be integrated. They have in comparison to the women of the richer regions and population-sections even fewer channels through which they can articulate their opinions and have an influence on the committees which are almost exclusively occupied by men.

Again and again women have shown resistance to the destruction of nature - for example in local environmental initiatives. They fight against air pollution, contamination of soil, deforestation, nuclear power plants, traffic etc. Also on an international level they organise themselves increasingly in global networks and thus manage to get their voices heard more clearly. Already on the UN-Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985, then at the World Women's Congress for a healthy planet in Miami in 1991 and in the global women's tent at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, women have declared their rights, solidarity between North and South, East and West, as well as the protection of the Earth's atmosphere. Under the pressure of the women's lobby 178 states have carried the obligation for the removal of discrimination against women in a sustainable development in Chapter 24 of the closing document of Rio, Agenda 21. In order for these basic ideas to enter into climate politics, the longterm dialogue and the international networking of women has to be continued.

EVA QUISTORP

"WHO'S TALKING ABOUT THE WEATHER? CLIMATE POLITICS FROM A FEMINIST VIEWPOINT"

It is the women involved in communal policy everywhere in the world, who insist on healthy air for their children and themselves as well as a turnaround in traffic policy. This obviously makes them clash with the car lobby, those that are keen on long-distance flights, and with the airline companies. It is predominantly women in the USA, in Japan and in Europe that are demanding an energy turnaround, and a drop-out of atomic energy and a drastic reduction of the energy consumption in the rich countries. The protest movement after the Chernobyl-catastrophy was in its contents and social make up essentially a women's movement.

The reference points for a feminist critique of the destruction of the earth-atmosphere are therefore:

a.) the majority of the extremely poor are women and children, who, as a result of their poverty, are also forced to destroy the environment and become environmental refugees.

b.) the fundamental critique of a modern natural science and technological development, which pretends to be gender-, interest- and class neutral, but which complies with the economic growth- and mobility-mania and which derives from the idea of control over our nature and from the dream of creating artificial worlds.

c.) the historically grown alliances of feminists, environmental activists- and experts in the whole world, which organise themselves in since Rio also as a lobby opposed to the UNO and which prepare themselves simultaneously for the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen, the Climate Conference in Berlin and the UNO Women's Conference in Beijing and practice "Solidarity in the Greenhouse".

In Cairo, at the World population Conference 1994, these women's lobbies tried to make clear once more to the mass media, which was fixed to the issue of the Pope and the abortion question, that there is no such thing as a "population-explosion" which is threatening the earth as such, but a explosion of inequality and violence against women, an explosion of obscene abundance and consumption in the rich regions and city quarters and metropolises, an explosion of weapon- and drug-dealing which is threatening the earth and our chances of survival on it (the drug automobile is included in this).

Even the World Bank has found out as a result of hard lobby-work of women's groups

as well as scientific studies, that a surmounting of the polarisation of the world and the increasing impoverisation and desertification of large regions cannot be achieved without the vehement promotion of women and access for women to land and credits, to education, science and institutions of decision-making.

The demands of the "Forum for Environment and Development" and the Berlin Climate Summit should therefore not fall behind the demands of the Agenda 21 for equal rights of women and the fight against women's poverty, because otherwise no alternative energy- and traffic politics worldwide can be achieved.

For the cultures of indigenous peoples the earth is the pacha mama (so say the Maya and the Mapuche), the mother earth, whose equilibrias should be appreciated and whose atmosphere should not be poisoned and misused, but should be loved as a gift.

Therefore we have to expand the term of progress, which has been defined by male-dominated science and journalism, and we have to question the blown-up pretended rationalities of the 'mobile society'. Therefore we have to rediscover forms of cooperative living and acting, which "female economies" have developed over centuries, with their wisdom, and develop from this creativity suitable technologies and a redistribution of the work of survival, a kind of work, that is so far predominantly the unpaid or low-paid work of women.

"Everyone talks about the weather, we don't" was a women-derogatory word of the 68-machos, because women and peasants like to talk about the weather, which they feel. But also behind the neatly appearing figures of floodings, droughts and sinking countries or islands, the CO₂-emission curves, or the UNO-protocoll-jargon or EU-legislation texts, this view can come up, which supersedes the sensuous perception-capability and the gender-dimension.

Thus watch out on all corridors and commissions of the climate-summit and: after Berlin it goes to Copenhagen and Beijing and into your very own everyday-life and consumption-habits.

WOMEN FOR PEACE AND ECOLOGY

WOMEN FOR PEACE AND ECOLOGY is an initiative of women working voluntarily in various groups of the women's -, peace - and environment movements since the 70s.

We are women of all ages and of all different philosophical backgrounds.

We work in local, national and international networks to strengthen the influence of the women's lobby in the public discussion and in local, national and international decision-making processes of environment-, peace-, and UNO- politics.

Women from our initiative have been deeply involved in

- the signature campaign by Women for Peace from Scandinavia and West Germany to stop the arms race of the superpowers which was presented at the 2nd World Women's Conference 1980 at Copenhagen having gained 50.000 signatures in 3 months
- numerous memorial protests and actions at Women's Peace Marches in the 80s to Brussels, Vienna, Geneva, Minsk...
- the Women's Peace Tent at the 3rd World Women's Conference in Nairobi, 1985
- the support of the belorussian initiative "Children of Chernobyl", the 1st Women KSZE 1990 in Berlin and the 2nd Women KSZE 1991 in Brussels
- the International Women's Forum "Women's Planet" at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, 1992 in Rio de Janeiro
- the European preparatory meeting for the 4th UN Conference on Women at the European Parliament, Strassburg, France 1994
- the Berlin Action for the 4th UN Conference on Women and the parallel NGO Forum and the fare- well party for the women's train to Beijing, 1995
- the work of the Environmental Caucus at the 4th UN Conference on Women in