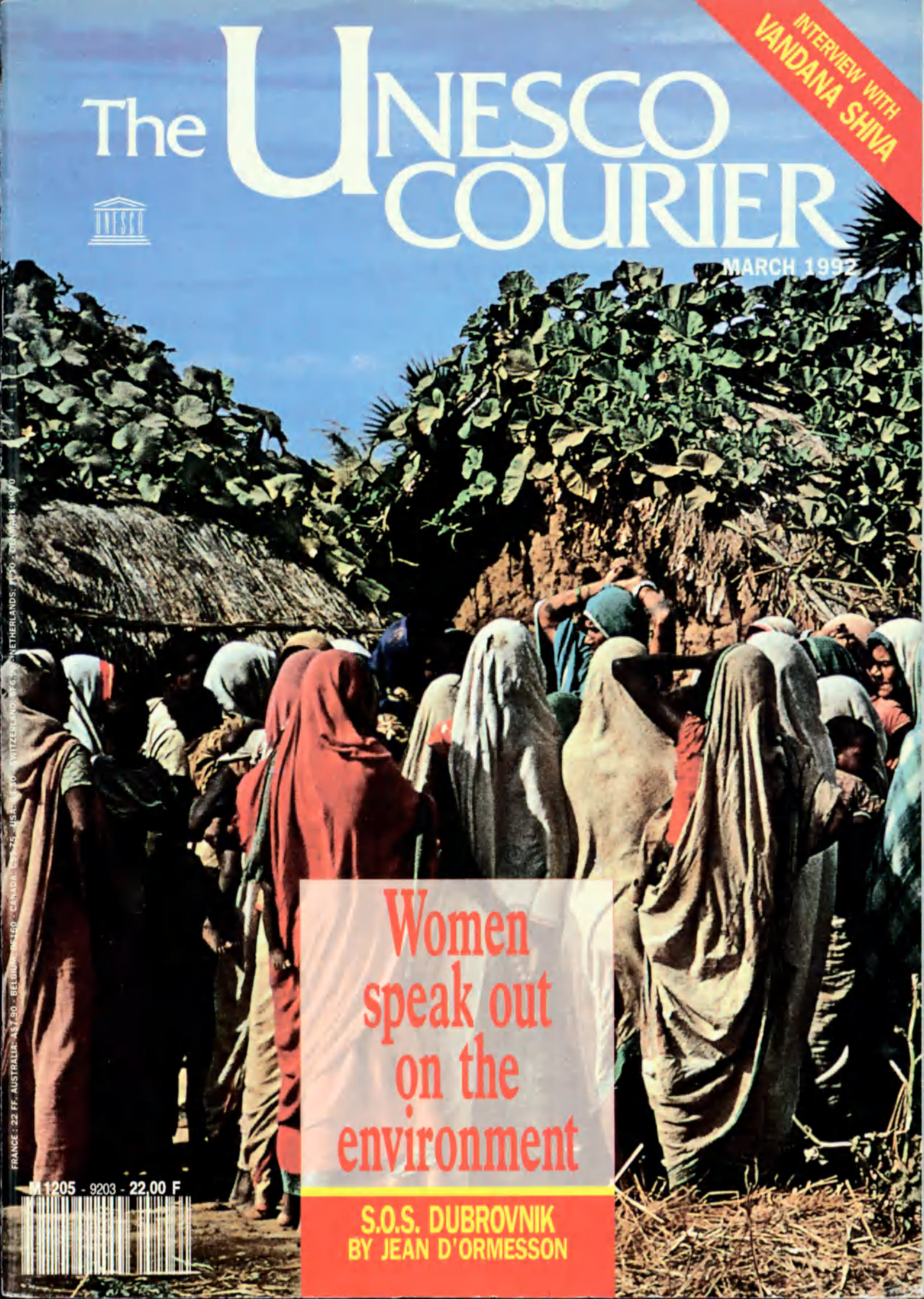
The UNESCO COURIER

MARCH 1992

INTERVIEW WITH VANDANA SHIVA



Women speak out on the environment

S.O.S. DUBROVNIK
BY JEAN D'ORMESSON

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encounters

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

Two cultures: same glow
Paper collage
by V. Balu

Two women, one Japanese and one Indian, are depicted in this collage by V. Balu of Bangalore (India). Their dresses differ, but the beauty and glow of womanhood are the same. So, too, is the light whose rays converge from a paper lantern and an oil lamp, sources that suggest the cultures of the two women.

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The UNESCO COURIER

45th YEAR
Published monthly in 36 languages and in Braille

"The Governments of the States parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare,

"that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed...

"that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

"For these reasons, the States parties ... are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives..."

Extract from the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO, London, 16 November 1945

Cover:
A group of village women in Bihar state (India).

Back cover:
A Mayan woman and her children in festival dress, San Cristobal de Las Casas (Mexico).

UNESCO'S FIRST 45 YEARS *(Part VI)*

by Michel Conil Lacoste

Above, dancers perform at a gala evening in honour of Bolshoi star Galina Ulanova held at UNESCO headquarters on 16 November 1981 for the benefit of handicapped children. Below, a medal designed by Joan Miró and produced to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Pablo Picasso.

1981

General policy

■ The Second World Congress of UNESCO Clubs sets up a World Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations.

■ *The ABC of Copyright* is published. It will later be translated and published in many languages.

Education

■ In the framework of the International Year of Disabled Persons, UNESCO and the Spanish government organize at Torremolinos (Spain) a World Congress on Actions and Strategies for Education, Prevention and Integration of the handicapped. UNESCO later helps to implement in the field of education the World Action Programme launched as part of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992).

Exact and natural sciences

■ A conference and an exhibition are held in Paris to mark the tenth anniversary of the Man and the Biosphere programme.

■ The protection of Venice and its lagoon are discussed at a scientific gathering.

Culture

■ An exhibition and a seminar organized in Paris in collaboration with the Organization of the Islamic Conference celebrate the commencement of the 15th century of the Hegira.

■ An international symposium marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of the theologian, philosopher and palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin.

■ A working group is set up to study the preparation of a *General History of the Caribbean.*

■ A meeting of experts on Celtic cultures takes place in Dublin.

■ With UNESCO support, Barbados hosts the 4th Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts.

Community radio, a short-cut to development

Communication

■ With technical assistance from UNESCO, a citizens-band FM radio station goes on the air from Homa Bay (Kenya). Other, similar stations will be opened at Guirandurokotte (Sri Lanka) in 1984, and on the Pacific island of Niue in 1986, the latter utilizing solar power.

■ The Asian News Network, a consortium of press agencies, is set up in Kuala Lumpur.

Events

■ The centenary of the birth of Pablo Picasso is celebrated at UNESCO's Paris headquarters. Joan Miró designs a commemorative medal, offering the original design to UNESCO through the International Association of Art, of which he is honorary president.

■ A gala evening is held as a tribute to Bolshoi star dancer Galina Ulanova, for the benefit of UNESCO's programme for handicapped children.

1982

General policy

■ Meeting in extraordinary session, the General Conference adopts a Medium-Term Plan for 1984-1989 that incorporates 14 major programmes predicated on an updated analysis of world problems. The 14th programme marks a new departure by grouping together for the first time all UNESCO's activities to improve the status of women.

■ UNESCO now has 158 Member States.

Culture

■ In Mexico City, the World Conference on Cultural Policies sums up and renews current thinking on cultural problems in the modern world. It adopts the Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policy and recommends a World Decade for Cultural Development, stressing the interaction between culture and development.

Participants in "War on War", a poetry evening held at UNESCO on 10 December 1982 to mark the 24th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. From left to right: Andrei Voznesenski, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Michèle Lalonde, Catherine Ringer, Mahmoud Darwish, Jean-Pierre Faye and Jean Metellus.

Communication

■ A World Congress on Books is held in London and adopts a sixfold plan of action that is later confirmed at the 1983 General Conference.

■ UNESCO signs an agreement with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) on a $2-million trust fund for the development of communications in Africa.

■ The Pan African News Agency (PANA) is established in Dakar with the assistance of UNESCO, under a programme of support for regional news agencies that also extends to Latin America and the Arab countries. Financial backing for PANA comes from AGFUND, from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and from UNESCO via the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). Other agencies are supported by a fund in trust established by the Federal Republic of Germany.

Events

■ Allen Ginsberg, Breyten Breytenbach, Kazuko Shiraishi, Sony Labou Tan'si, Thiago de Mello, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Andrei Voznesenski and other poets contribute to "War on War", a poetry gala held at UNESCO headquarters to celebrate the 34th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

■ A forum of Asian writers, organized in co-operation with the Asian Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations, meets in Tokyo to discuss "Cultural Identity". Participants include Ai Qing (China), Yasushi Inoue (Japan) and Faiz Ahmad Faiz (Pakistan).

1983

General policy

■ In a letter to the Director-General of UNESCO, U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz announces his country's intention to withdraw from the Organization.

Education

■ An Intergovernmental Conference on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, with a view to Developing a Climate of Opinion Favourable to the Strengthening of Security and Disarmament is held in Paris.

■ An international congress to mark the thirtieth anniversary of UNESCO's Associated Schools project is held in Sofia (Bulgaria).

Social sciences

■ A Round Table is held in Paris to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the philosopher Karl Jaspers.

Culture

■ The latest catalogue of the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works, UNESCO's literary translations programme, lists more than 900 works from 90 different literatures; the authors published include 11 Nobel Prizewinners. The main aim of the programme is the translation of classics of world literature into widely-used languages, notably French and English. Examples from the catalogue include Cao Zhan's *Dream of the Red Chamber* translated from Chinese into French, *Speculative Hymns of the Veda* rendered into French from the original Sanskrit, a selection of Octavio Paz's poems translated into English, and an anthology of Hungarian poetry translated into Spanish. Conversely, Shakespeare and Hemingway have been translated into Indonesian, Plato and Goethe into Tamil and Cervantes into Hindi.

■ Restoration work at Borobudur (Indonesia) is completed, bringing to an end the most important programme of its kind since the international campaign to save the monuments of Nubia.

Communication

■ A first meeting of experts on Co-operation among Regional Communication Training Institutions is held in Paris.

■ As part of World Communications Year, UNESCO supports an experimental exchange of television news transmissions by satellite involving 25 countries in Africa, Asia and the Arab world.

The temple of Borobudur (Indonesia), which was restored under UNESCO auspices.

A fine harvest is reaped from improved varieties of wild cranberry, a species protected in the South Atlantic Coastal Plain Biosphere Reserve, USA.

■ The McLuhan Teleglobe Canada Award is created under UNESCO's patronage. Offered every two years, it aims to reward works or actions of individuals or groups that "have contributed in an exceptional manner to furthering a better understanding of the influence exerted by communications media and technology on society in general and in particular on its cultural, artistic and scientific activities".

Events

■ At the inaugural session of the 22nd session of the General Conference, François Mitterrand, President of the host country, states: "Thus we find UNESCO returning to its original source of inspiration: to build in spite of storms; to build a world in which hope will find its place".

■ King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Nelson Mandela (imprisoned at the time) share the first Simón Bolívar Prize. Established jointly by UNESCO and Venezuela on the basis of a Venezuelan fund, the award seeks to honour those who, in the spirit of Simón Bolívar, "have made an outstanding contribution to the freedom, independence and dignity of peoples and to the strengthening of solidarity among nations, or who have fostered their development or facilitated the quest for a new international economic, social and cultural order".

Three empty chairs

1984

General policy

■ UNESCO's regular budget for 1984-85 amounts to $374 million (about two-thirds the price of a nuclear aircraft-carrier), of which 38% is allocated to education. Extra-budgetary resources for the same biennium amount to $231 million. The budget for 1981-1983 had been $430 million.

■ The Executive Board establishes a Temporary Committee to recommend ways of improving the functioning of the Organization. The Director-General sets up four consultative working-groups to study staff management, budgeting, evaluation techniques and public information, and a fifth to conduct a critical analysis of the programme.

■ In December, a year after giving notice of its intention to do so, the United States withdraws from UNESCO.

■ The United Kingdom and Singapore give notice of their intention to leave the Organization.

Education

■ *Campaigning for Literacy,* a report prepared for UNESCO by the International Council for Adult Education, is published. It describes and evaluates literacy campaigns in eight countries.

■ The "African languages—Horizon 2000" project is introduced as part of a ten-year plan to promote African languages, particularly in education, communication and social life.

■ 1984-85: As part of the "Education for All" programme, a Major Project in the Field of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean and a Regional Programme for the Eradication of Illiteracy in Africa are launched.

■ The Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves is adopted. Biosphere reserves are zones designated under the Man and the Biosphere programme for the conservation of the plant and animal genetic heritage, for research into human use of ecosystems, for recording environmental change and for education and training. In 1984 there are 252 Reserves in 66 countries.

Culture

■ The first meeting of the editorial committee preparing a *General History of Latin America* is held in Buenos Aires in the former home of the noted Argentine woman of letters Victoria Ocampo, who had generously bequeathed the building to UNESCO.

■ A meeting of experts is held in Rio de Janeiro to discuss the preservation and development of handicrafts in the modern world.

■ The 5th International Congress of Southeast European Studies is held.

Communication

■ With the co-operation of France and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Fed. Rep. of Germany), a mission is sent to the Pacific to prepare the first sub-regional project for the training of radio broadcasters and technicians.

1985

General policy

■ The 23rd session of the General Conference is held in Sofia (Bulgaria). In his opening speech, the President of the Conference, Nikolai Todorov (Bulgaria), states that "UNESCO has held firm. It has stood firm while moving with and adapting to the times, but without ever denying that which constitutes at once its basis and its ultimate purpose."

■ For the 1986-87 biennium, the General Conference votes a budget of $307 million, later reduced to $289 million after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom and Singapore from UNESCO.

■ The General Conference takes note of the formation of UNESCO support groups in Spain, India, the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, France, Latin America and Africa, and invites the international community to intensify its activity in this respect.

■ In his closing address to the 23rd session, the Director-General refers to "the irreplaceable role which the intellectual and scientific communities play on behalf of UNESCO", and appeals to them "to find their rightful place again within UNESCO, in accordance with the intentions of the Organization's founding fathers". In an earlier speech, he had recalled that the original idea of UNESCO's founders had been that the intellectual community should form one of the three roots that fortify "the forum for human communications that is UNESCO", the other two being the political realities of Member States and the dedication and competence of an international secretariat.

■ The withdrawal of the United Kingdom and Singapore from UNESCO takes effect.

■ A study of UNESCO's work entitled *UNESCO on the eve of its fortieth anniversary* is published.

Education

■ Although there are still 889 million illiterates in the world, the rate of illiteracy in proportion to world population has fallen from 37.1% in 1970 to 27.7% in 1985.

■ Two joint UNESCO/IAU (International Association of Universities) programmes are launched: an international inventory of research

projects on the problems of higher education, and a series of studies on the impact of satellite technology on university teaching and research.

Exact and natural sciences

■ An Intergovernmental Informatics Programme is launched to improve access to information technology in countries that do not possess such technology.

Social sciences

■ As part of International Youth Year, the World Congress on Youth is held in Barcelona in July.
■ Consecutive Round Tables are held on al-Ghazali, the great Muslim theologian and philosopher, and on Maimonides, Aristotelian philosopher and Talmudic scholar.

Culture

■ The 15th UNESCO travelling exhibition of reproductions of works of art is devoted to Slavic art. Its two successors will be devoted to Buddhist and Celtic art respectively.

Communication

■ Awarded for the first time, the IPDC-UNESCO Prize for Rural Communication goes to India's "Kheda" project, which uses traditional forms of cultural expression to create audio-visual programmes and also relies on advanced telecommunications satellite technology.
■ A Symposium on the Cultural, Social and Economic Impact of the New Communication Technologies is held in Rome.

An award-winning entry in an international competition for young architects organized by UNESCO on the theme "Tomorrow's Habitat". Winning projects were exhibited at the international exhibition held at Tsukuba (Japan) in 1985.

Events

■ UNESCO organizes a worldwide competition for young architects on the theme of "Tomorrow's Habitat" in the framework of an international exhibition held at Tsukuba in Japan.

UNESCO in troubled waters

1986

General policy

■ Following budgetary cuts resulting from the withdrawal of the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore, 800 posts are abolished or "put in reserve" in the UNESCO Secretariat. With half a dozen exceptions, the staff members affected are redeployed within the Secretariat.
■ Meeting in Addis Ababa, the 22nd summit conference of the Organization of African Unity pays tribute to the Director-General and hopes he may continue to serve the cause of international co-operation at the head of UNESCO.
■ The 8th summit conference of the Non-aligned Countries movement affirms its total support for UNESCO.
■ The amount received by UNESCO up to 1986 from AGFUND is almost $15 million, benefiting 30 projects in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Arab countries.
■ Following the People's Republic of China (1985), the Republic of the Maldives becomes the 90th state to ratify the World Heritage Convention. 216 sites on 5 continents now feature on the World Heritage List.
■ During the two years 1984-85, UNESCO carried out an estimated one thousand operational projects, organized 838 instructional and refresher courses attended by 30,000 specialists, devoted almost $30 million to its major scientific programmes, contributed to the education of 3,000 young people and launched or continued 20 international campaigns for the safeguard of historic monuments and sites.
■ Since its creation, UNESCO has published more than 7,000 titles, covering all its fields of competence, in 70 languages and 150 countries.

Education

■ The Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in Asia and the Pacific is prepared.

Exact and natural sciences

■ The Intergovernmental Committee for the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme holds its first session.

Social sciences

■ UNESCO's contributions to the International Year of Peace include a *Yearbook on Peace and Conflict Studies*, which lists studies produced throughout the world on the educational, scientific and cultural factors favourable to peace, and the 7th edition of the *World Directory of Peace Research and Training Institutions*. Other activities targeted primarily at young people make use of the network of UNESCO Associated Schools and UNESCO Clubs.

Culture

■ The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) transmits to the UN UNESCO's projected action programme for the possible proclamation by the General Assembly of the United Nations at its 41st session of a World Decade for Cultural Development, under the joint auspices of the UN and UNESCO. The launch is scheduled for 1988.
■ The 48th congress of PEN International is held in New York with the participation of UNESCO.

Events

■ Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, Andrew Young, Abdus Salam, Mahdi Elmandjra, Kobo Abe and others take part in a Round Table on "The Future of International Co-operation: Perspectives for the 21st Century", held in Tokyo.
■ UNESCO's 40th anniversary is celebrated worldwide. In London it coincides with the official founding of a "Friends of UNESCO" group. Ceremonies are also held in the United States, notably organized by "Americans for the Universality of UNESCO". At Paris headquarters, the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations organizes an "Open Door on the UNESCO Movement" involving some 250 representatives of UNESCO Clubs and Associated Schools from 40 countries.

Communication

■ UNESCO's problems attract widespread media attention. Partly as a result of misunderstandings, controversy continues about UNESCO's position regarding communications. It dies down three years later with the abandonment of the concept of a "New World Information and Communication Order".

TO BE CONTINUED

VANDANA SHIVA

talks to Judithe Bizot

Vandana Shiva is an Indian physicist and feminist militant who works with many community action groups fighting against environmental destruction. In this interview she examines the links between the ecological crisis, the marginalization of women and the dominant model of economic development.

■ *You are a physicist who abandoned your country's nuclear energy programme to devote yourself to nature and to halting its destruction. How did you reach your present position?*

— Ever since I was a child, love and knowledge of nature have given me my deepest satisfaction. I was very lucky to have been born the daughter of a forester in India and to have grown up in the Himalayan forest. Then I studied physics. The real basics of nature as defined in the reductionist scheme of things are understood through physics, the foundation of all the sciences. I had the opportunity to study biology and chemistry too, but real, profound understanding of nature was supposed to be reached through physics. Then I went into nuclear physics, where I experienced massive disappointments. It was only when I was doing my master's degree that I realized how unthinking nuclear scientists were about the question of radiation hazards. We were taught how to create chain reactions in nuclear material and we knew all about energy transformations, and so on, but nothing about the interaction of radiation with living systems. I learned about radiation impacts from my sister, who is a doctor. When I was working in a nuclear reactor in India she kept saying: "Promise me you're never going to go back there!" "But why?" I'd say and she would reply, "but you could have babies with mutations. You don't know what's going to happen to you."

When I was groping my way and exploring these issues, senior physicists would say, "You don't need to know these things." Again this was an exclusion and a violation of my search for knowledge. If science means to know, then I had no scientific training. So I went to Canada and enrolled on a Foundations of Physics programme, where some of the basic questions about science that were troubling me were being asked.

I knew that if I continued studying the foundations of quantum theory I should be marginal to my situation and I decided that

I must do something to relate myself to the Indian context. I shifted to science and technology policy issues. In the meantime, the Chipko movement had been created and because this had happened where I was from, I kept going back and doing volunteer work and writing for them. Before I knew where I was, ecology had become my primary concern.

■ *What is the Chipko movement? In your book* Staying Alive *you talk of the forest, for instance, not as a product for the market but as* prakiti*—a life-giving force. You talk of the importance of women in the struggle against the massive consumption of natural resources.*
— I responded to the destruction of the forest first because I was a child of the Himalayan forests. They were my identity and my sense of being. The erosion of the forests hit me very hard. Just before I left for Canada, I wanted to go back and visit a favourite spot of mine, a place where the British had built lovely rest houses from which the foresters managed the forests. There was one I particularly loved, near a stream in the beautiful oak forest. I went back there, and the oak forest had become a mere sprinkling of trees, and the stream was no longer gushing with water. When I talked to the people in the area I found that the stream had disappeared because they had cut the oak forest down to plant apple orchards, an enterprise which had never really been successful. (Apple trees need very fertile soil and virgin forest is usually cut down for this purpose.)

As for my involvement with Chipko, a movement of Himalayan women dedicated to the protection of the environment, I first got to know a leading figure in the movement named Sundarlal Batinguna, who was a great inspiration to people like myself. But at a second and more lasting level my involvement was with the ordinary women who form the bedrock of Chipko. It was their perceptions and their beliefs that were the really rich foundations of my knowledge of ecology. They offered me a new sensibility about relationships. Ordinary people don't theorize. They have visions and beliefs. The germ of an idea or insight that I have developed has always been a phrase or an action from a person committed to act in a concrete situation. All my theory-building has come out of this nature-centred and woman-centred action. The special relationships women have with the environment are due to this. In my book *Staying Alive* I attempted to explain why my insights came from women who were considered ignorant and marginal, who were not given a platform of any kind by society.

Why is it that women sense destruction faster and are more persevering in the struggles against destruction? Why do they carry on when everyone else is cynical and hopeless? The reason is that women have a distinctive perception of what life is, a sense of what is really vital, which colours their view of what is at stake in the world.

■ *Can women lead the way in the new concern for the environment?*
— I think women *are* taking the lead today. The important thing is that their leadership should be taken seriously. For us in India Chipko marked the reawakening of an ecological consciousness, in a movement stretching from the villages of central India to the western Ghats. This new ecological consciousness is as old as our civilization, but what is new is its re-emergence as a political force in response to destruction, a force like Chipko in which ordinary women define the issues.

It doesn't take much effort to say, let's bring women in. The crucial issue is let's not push women out. Because of its very specific nature, the relationship between women and the environment differs from one place to another. The movements that have led me towards my own commitments and decisions originate in the most marginal sectors of our society, in the so-called backward communities and specifically among the women of those communities.

These oak trees
save and worship them,
because their roots store water,
their leaves have milk and fodder,
the breeze blows cool
over the beautiful rhododendron flower.

A song of the Chipko movement

If societies have succeeded in reproducing themselves for centuries, they are examples of sustainability. Today, unfortunately, these are the societies that are labelled backward, whereas the societies that give up too quickly traditional ways of doing things are called progressive. That definition, of course, is biased. It is in countries like India that you find groups of women who are embedded both in nature and in sustainable cultures. Perennial civilizations, not ones that burst into growth and collapse, have something very special to offer. They enshrine the capacity to regenerate, the capacity to heal, the capacity to give and take, to build and create.

But I believe that women in the North are also intimately linked to the environment. Even in the most advanced societies women have been left to care for children, homes and health. A wonderful study was carried out in Helsinki which showed that, whatever yardstick you take—time, energy, work—women are running Finnish society and the Finnish economy. It's wrong to say that women are

Water-bearers in Rajasthan (India).

unproductive, that they don't work. It is often said that women who stay at home do not work, but in fact they work harder than anyone else.

Nature for me comprises the life-giving forces, the life-support systems, the ecological systems that make life possible. These things are violated in the cities and in the country through nuclear hazards, toxic wastes, contaminated water and polluted air. We need those life-giving sources of pure air, pure water, pure food, no matter where we are.

■ *Are we not in the process of amputating something from ourselves by rapidly diminishing our powers of regeneration?*
— The term "feminine principle" is basically just an English translation of *prakiti,* a force in nature and life which exists all round us, in women *and* in men. To me, the rise of modern patriarchy tended to kill the feminine principle in all its fullness, and in particular to annihilate it totally in man. In a sense, the rise of the masculine mode of knowledge, production and governance was a way of crushing something essential to society as a whole—to males and to females. Fortunately, however, whereas the patriarchs considered that they were ruling over passive creatures (women and nature), they could never fully take that life away. They could distort and stifle it but they couldn't destroy it entirely.

I can't imagine any recovery or flowering of these creative forces of nature, of women coming into their own, that would leave men untouched. Men will do one of two things. Either they will react violently because this flowering creates a new kind of insecurity and inadequacy. Or, hopefully, more men will sense that they have impoverished themselves, and the feminine principle will emerge as a creative force which values nurture above domination, sustaining above destruction, rooted and experienced concrete knowledge above abstract, irrelevant knowledge. Surely these values are important enough for men to recognize and support them.

■ *Are you saying that male-dominated knowledge should be thrown out?*
— Every society except contemporary industrial society has had criteria as to what it should say "no" to. Industrial society is the only one which believes that if you have the power to do something you must do it. Indian philosophy is built on the concept that "yes, you might have the power, but it is important that you use your discrimination in the exercise of that power". A society should be able to make choices and judgements about means, to have values as ends.

I feel that plurality of choice creates an opportunity to decide what is needed and desirable, and what is not, and what is good and what is not. If that kind of opportunity is honestly and scientifically made available to society, with the idea of maintaining quality of life, with participation by people, then it will undoubtedly be taken. It should also be recognized that scientists are as fallible as anyone else and that science and its institutions are more often than not prostituted to economic interests, since the structure of power is so closely married to the structure of knowledge. Many technologies are used to serve the economic interests of the powerful, not choices based on ecology and ethics. Women have already made their choices on these issues.

■ *Does the exploration of other planets have a place in a world-view which is concerned with improving the quality of life, joy, sharing, and meeting basic needs?*
— It's all right to explore. What is wrong is to justify the exploration of outer space in terms of solving the problems of this planet. I believe it is immoral to use people and their needs as the reasons for outer-space programmes, which should be seen as what they are: the indulgence of a group of very privileged people and countries. Everyone has a right to explore, but to use that right as an imperative into which everyone must fit is another matter. It's hiding the other agendas which go along with space programmes, which are not simply pursued for their own sake but for military and other ends.

■ *What is your attitude to global, planetary management and the question of local versus global ecologies?*
— So-called "primitive" peoples have always had a planetary cosmology, and for them the planet has existed in every action they have taken. The most isolated communities have had a view not just of this planet but of how it relates to others and of how balance must be maintained. The planetary has always existed in the local. Any attempt to disenfranchise local communities of their planetary consciousness is unethical.

■ *In what specific ways do local communities understand or use planetary knowledge?*
— Traditional systems of agriculture in every society have been based on the relationships between planets, which have provided the basis for deciding which is the right time to sow and which crops should be grown together. For example, many peasants possess a kind of scientific knowledge which enables them to recognize certain types of insect

behaviour which indicate impending floods, so that they move out in time. But all this is a thing of the past because pesticides have killed these living indicators. We create systems which seem more reliable than traditional systems but are actually more vulnerable.

I see two ways in which industrial society has been impoverished. Ethically, it is the only society which cannot distinguish between good and bad, which does not provide a chance to say no, which has no restraining criteria, values or limits to action. Secondly, it seems to lack any realization that its systems are increasingly based on highly vulnerable forms of organization. There is no comprehension of how these systems break down when most needed. If my relationship to nature provides me with knowledge and a feeling for what's happening to the world and what changes are coming, it helps me guide and protect my animals, myself and others. I have certain indicators available to me without risk of breakdown by which I can act in informed ways. Satellites, computer networks and so on are made to replace what is considered unreliable, but they are actually more vulnerable.

■ *What influence can women have? How can they make a difference? How can they improve their lives and their environment?* — The first thing is that they should not lose faith in the knowledge they have and that they should trust in themselves. I also believe that when those Himalayan streams were disappearing women knew that deforestation is linked to desertification and stood their ground, even though the foresters said that forests have no link with watershed management. Women's instruments of resistance are standing their ground, believing in their knowledge, having faith in their values, not losing confidence, not feeling inferior. The dominating system imposes its choice on people by transforming every multiple choice into a tragic last possible one. Things are not black or white. I think that in our time it is very important to be able to turn around and say, no matter how powerless one is, well things could be different, could they not? I don't think that merely increasing the number of choices necessarily enriches people's lives. The criteria of choice are what really count. Merely to increase the number of choices is to adopt a supermarket mentality of consumer choice. It is essential to know when a choice is not a real choice, and that is impossible unless people have a sense of discrimination within them. Relating to nature, being embedded in it, provides the ethical framework for choice between different scientific and technological options. ■

Women speak out on the environment

THIS issue of the *UNESCO Courier* is testimony to what women all over the world are thinking and doing about the ecological crisis affecting our daily lives—thoughts and actions that have their roots in centuries of observation and understanding of nature. It raises the question of whether women, through their closeness to the earth and their instinct to protect and nurture all that is near to them, have a special environmental awareness.

The following pages show that women are in many cases victims of the destructive forces in the environmental struggle and prime movers against them. They are claiming a place in the forefront of environmental action strategies. They maintain that nature does not belong to humankind but humankind to nature.

The women who write here represent the experience of thousands of others who share their concerns about the health of our peoples, our lands, our waters, our wastes, our systems, our values, our societies. Whether in rural areas or in towns and cities, they are through their actions showing the way to a healthy environment. Fully aware of the global ecological situation, they are acting locally to start to make things better.

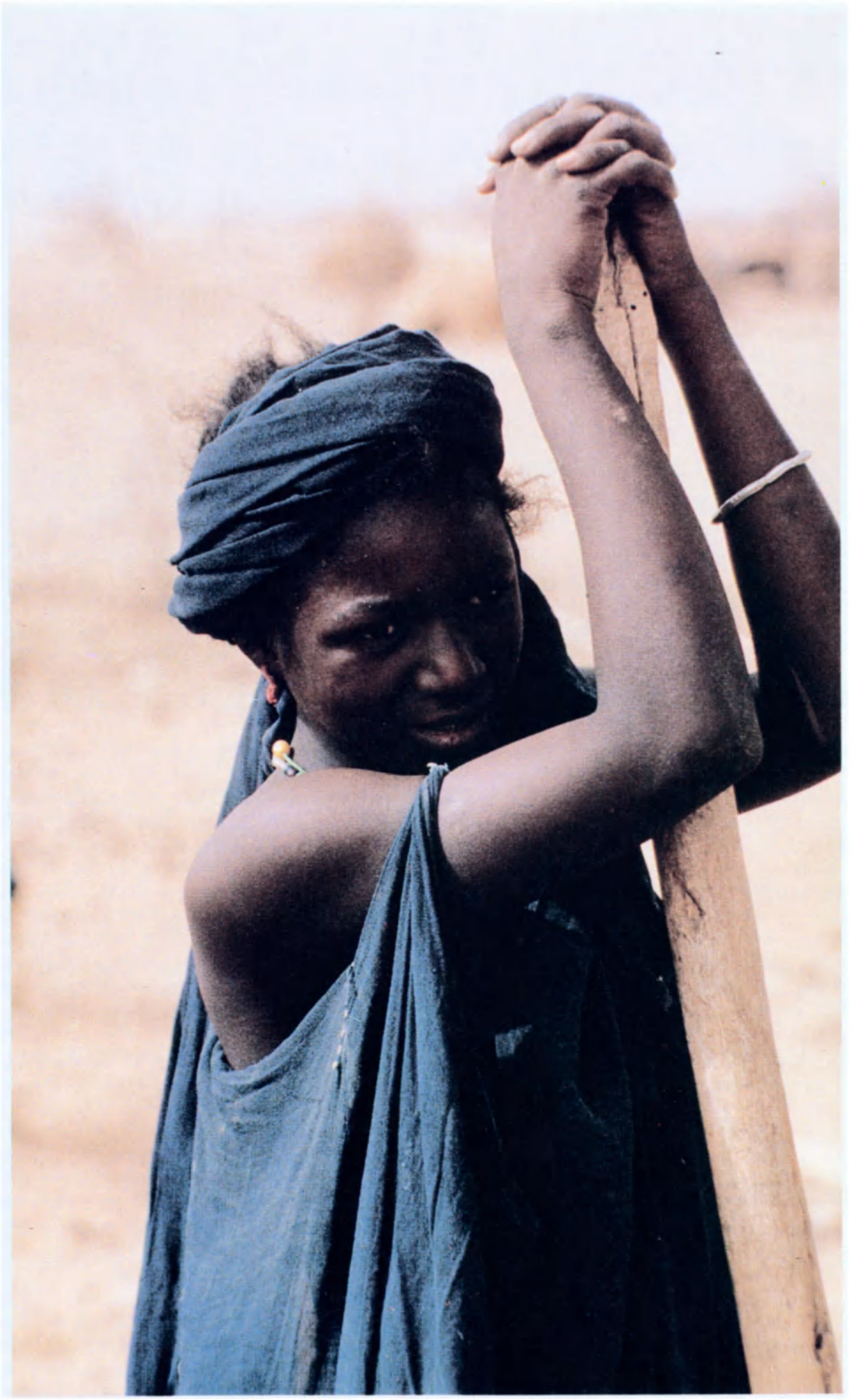
The writers warn us to question the notion of unlimited economic growth and expansion. They speak out against the marginalization of peoples and countries, whether in the North or in the South. They protest against the disappearance of biological and cultural diversity, and challenge those military and industrial processes that cause environmental degradation and the displacement of peoples, overconsumption, debt and poverty.

Instead, they commit themselves to a relationship with the environment based on principles of regeneration and reciprocity, and on the forming of partnerships between cultures, religions, classes, languages and genders. ■

JUDITHE BIZOT

JUDITHE BIZOT is an American sociologist and a former UNESCO staff member who currently works with a number of non-governmental organizations engaged in community action and the protection of the environment. She was special consultant for this issue of the *UNESCO Courier*.

 Opposite page, a Mauritanian village woman.



Women and Nature, an alliance for survival

by Perdita Huston

'Women know intuitively that a society which turns its back on Nature is doomed'

FROM the very beginning of human experience, women's work has been close to, and dependent upon, Nature. In early hunter-gatherer societies, women collected seeds, nuts and roots to feed their families and communities. Survival was dependent upon an intimate knowledge of Nature and her ways. This remains true in many regions today. Women know intuitively that a society which turns its back on Nature is doomed. And many women today believe that the dominant forces of global society are, in fact, ignoring Nature's needs.

Everywhere the natural environment is being over-exploited, weakened and soiled. Evidence abounds that the dangers of uncontrolled industrialization are leading to the pollution of lakes and rivers and to human tragedies like that which occurred at Bhopal (India), where thousands died as a result of a deadly gas leak from a chemical plant in 1984. Just as obvious are the large-scale loss of tree cover, soils and biological diversity as a result of uncontrolled economic development, and the horrors of chemical warfare and nuclear power and testing.

Women have learned that their breast milk is contaminated with dioxin, that pesticides and herbicides are present in ground water. They are told that the life-giving Sun is becoming dangerous due to a weakened ozone layer, that children everywhere are vulnerable to genetic disorders caused by contaminated environments. Women have observed these phenomena and feel alienated from a society which has lost touch with the beauty and power of Nature. They fear that future generations will be deprived of the diversity of Nature's creatures and of the music of bird song.

Another fear emerges from women's historical experience. Over the millennia women have watched as men fought each other, often over access to Nature's resources. Women always then picked up the pieces, planted crops anew, nursed the sick and wounded, and carried on. So it still is today.

As the planet's natural resources diminish, and as a growing world population increases demands on those resources, competition for access to them will escalate. This struggle for limited resources may well result in new resource wars. Evidence of growing pressure is found in nations which depend on the Nile or the Euphrates, in Europe where the fouling of soils, rivers and air by neighbouring nations is a source of sickness and friction, and in the world's seas where competing mechanized fishing fleets of powerful nations deplete fish stocks of the poor coastal and island peoples.

Fear for the future—of a damaged and dangerous natural environment or of the violence it brings—is what unites women in today's world.

Margarita Arias, the former First Lady of Costa Rica, added another dimension to women's perspective when she said, "No one speaks out for the protection of the environment with greater moral authority than women. Only those who have fought for the right to protect their own bodies from abuse can truly understand the rape and plunder of our forests, rivers and soils." Her words reach deeply into women's experience and being, and also help to explain women's dismissal of the argument which focuses blame for environmental degradation solely on uncontrolled population growth.

Environmental degradation—who are the real culprits?

It is true that excessive population growth rates in some areas far exceed the capacity of communities or nations to provide for new citizens. It is also true that pressures on the fragile

PERDITA HUSTON, who has dual French and U.S. nationality, is a former director of the Population and Sustainable Development Programme at the World Conservation Union. The author of *Third World Women Speak Out* (Praeger, New York, 1979), she is currently a consultant with the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

"Women's labour has been unpaid, and thus considered without 'value', since time began." Above, women washing clothes in Sumatra (Indonesia).

ecosystems of some nations with high fertility rates are increasing at an alarming rate. At the same time it must never be forgotten that a child born in an industrialized country makes far more demands on the world's natural resources than a poor child in a poor nation. Industries and businesses which consume resources and produce polluting wastes are also more likely to be located in the highly industrialized nations. Addressing consumption patterns at the same time as one discusses population growth rates is necessary to refocus attention on the complexities of the problem.

The major environmental threats to life on Earth are the weakening of the ozone layer, which protects all living creatures from the damaging effects of the Sun's rays, and the phenomenon of climate change with its attendant rise in sea levels and changes in food production patterns. These occurrences can hardly be blamed on the large families of the poor. Unclean industrial production, chemical pollutants, the burning of fossil fuels and official reluctance to curtail the damage they cause are more appropriate candidates for attention.

Consumption patterns in wealthy nations, militarism and poverty are major causes of pressures on natural systems. Paring back needless consumption and allocating a fraction of military expenditures to human development and social services and to the eradication of poverty, would diminish pressures on the natural environment.

Hundreds of millions of women have no access to reproductive health care or family planning services. Half a million of them die each year of pregnancy-related causes. Millions more are permanently maimed or ill. This is a major public-health crisis which has gone unnoticed for far too long. Providing reproductive health services to the 300-500 million women who wish to plan their families would improve women's health and lower birth rates as well. It is simply a matter of allocating the needed resources.

Plundering the 'free gifts' of Nature

Women believe that the present world economic order is the major cause of environmental degradation. The global reach of the current economic structure is well known, and in the free market system, which seeks profit at all costs, it is easy to disregard Nature: her "gifts" are free.

Who could be better placed to understand this point of view than women? Women's labour has been unpaid, and thus considered without "value", since time began. In Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) accounts, no monetary value is attached to women's contributions to national economies as family-farm labourers, food processors, providers of health care, carers for the elderly, cooks, cleaners, laundresses, and teachers and nurturers of children. Through long experience women have learned that societies attach little value to that which can be exploited without cost. And so it has been with Nature. We live in a world which has plundered its life-giving ecological systems for the benefit of the few.

In Africa, Asia and Latin America, impoverished peasants drift into crowded cities. In Europe and the United States agro-businesses are pushing family farms out of existence. In the state of Iowa alone, 20,000 farming families left the land in the last decade because they were unwilling or unable to compete with profit-driven, high-tech, mechanized, chemical-assisted agriculture. Like their counterparts in the developing world, these farm families are often obliged to seek employment in hostile urban settings.

Foreign 'aid' from poor to rich

The debt burdens of poor nations have resulted in structural adjustment policies mandated by the multilateral lending institutions. Such policies require the reallocation of national resources to

Right, women in Burkina Faso grind karite nuts to extract oil seed for cooking.
Opposite page, a mother breastfeeds her twins while weeding around seedlings at a tree nursery in the Paro valley (Bhutan).
Below, learning to use pesticides at a workshop organized in Sumatra (Indonesia) in October 1991 by the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

provide for debt repayment. All too often, social service budgets are diminished in the search for additional funds, depriving families of health care, education and family planning services. In addition, in an absurd form of reverse foreign aid, poor governments export precious natural resources and capital to repay "national debt" to the commercial banks of wealthy nations.

A recent series of meetings held in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development brought together women environmentalists, social workers, politicians and feminists from diverse cultures and nations (see pages 27 and 37). From these gatherings emerged consensus on the dimensions and causes of the human and ecological crises which we witness today. Women from the so-called "developing world", industrialized nations and the new nations of Eastern Europe expressed similar views on the state of the world. They no longer feel separated by geography or by political systems for they recognize a common threat to long-term human survival.

They denounce the development model which has produced such shameful consequences. The international economic order is not only unbalanced and unjust, it also destroys ecological systems and the societies which depend upon them.

They are speaking up and pointing out the connections between economic policy and environmental and human impoverishment. They are deeply troubled by the increasing inequities between the quality of life in the industrialized nations and that in the so-called "developing" nations. While millions of women walk for hours every day in search of a few twigs with which to cook a single meagre meal, others open cans of chemical-laden foods and cook them in microwave ovens. Women are outraged by disparities in the nutrition, education, health and opportunities available to the world's children. Tens of millions of street children are the result of failed "development".

They are demanding accountability from governments and corporations. They realize that they have been poorly informed about the dangers of the contemporary world. They identify with the ill-informed victims of dumped toxic wastes, the residues of faraway industry, and of military activities which damage the environment and are shrouded in secrecy in the name of national security.

They are denouncing those traditional national security strategies, saying they no longer apply to the contemporary world. Based on weaponry, domination of trade and of regions of

the world, these concepts are creating the very problems which undermine the security of natural systems.

The logic is simple: there can be no national security without global environmental security. Weaponry cannot provide us with global environmental health. Only a change in lifestyles, the adoption of ethical values consistent with long-term respect for and protection of Nature, and the development of environmentally-friendly industries and energy sources, will allow us to live lightly on the planet. As a basic human right, "natural systems security" presupposes a radical change in the thinking and responsibility of global and national leadership. Yet "leaders" continue to conduct business as usual, continue to take secret decisions affecting the world's seas, polar regions, skies and forests.

Next June delegations from all over the world will gather in Brazil to discuss global environment and development policy for the next century at the first "Earth Summit", the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

The Conference is providing a rallying point for those concerned about the long-term habitability of the planet, but will the participants recognize that survival depends on a redefinition of development and its underlying values, a restructuring of the world economy to preserve human and environmental rights? Will this Earth Summit produce the acts of political vision and courage which have been so lacking in the past?

Development must be built on a foundation of human and environmental rights and dignity. People-centred, environmentally sustainable strategies must replace the economically oriented policies of the past. Adjustments in life-style and expectations must be made and, yes, all this will no doubt be costly. But the cost of not acting will be far greater.

Transforming the way we live on Earth

At the conclusion of the Global Assembly for Women and Environment and the World Congress of Women for a Healthy Planet, held in Miami, Florida, in November 1991, delegates denounced nuclear power and called for boycotts of non-environmentally friendly industries and products. Cancellation of official bilateral debt was deemed a first step in alleviating the devastating structural adjustment demands made on poor countries. This new women's movement, which joins environmental and human rights, is bound to grow and strengthen. It is a movement which calls into question the sectoral approach to world problems and outmoded ideas of security.

The women's visions that created Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the Greenham Common protest in the United Kingdom, the Kenyan Green Belt Movement and Costa Rica's Guararí community housing, will prevail. But although women are finding remarkable solutions at the local level, they realize that these efforts will fail if spoliation at the global level continues. Women now challenge the world's governments and the United Nations system to work with them to create a healthy global environment in which all species will thrive. ■

Indian women laden with baskets of coal.

Sounding the alarm

by Maria Cherkasova

When a Russian journalist invited her readers to take part in a survey on the environment, many of them told a grim story of ecological disaster and despair

A year ago I asked readers of *Znanie-sila,* a popular science journal for which I write an ecological column, to reply to an environmental survey. In all the twenty years I have spent working on the magazine, I have never received so much mail. Letters poured in from all over Russia and also from other republics, or states as they now are. They came from men and women of very different ages and professional backgrounds. But it was the women who wrote the most detailed accounts, marked by the strongest emotions.

When I collected all the letters together and absorbed what the participants in this long-distance Round Table had to say, I was appalled by the mass of terrifying information that had come through my mail-box.

Take the case of Zoïa Islamova, who wrote to me from the town of Kasli-5, in the Chelyabinsk region of the southern Urals. Zoïa had been the victim of a nuclear disaster that took place long before Chernobyl, an explosion that occurred on 29 September 1957 in the nuclear waste storage facility of the Maïak chemical complex, and led to the release of almost 20 million curies of radioactivity.

"Nobody told us what had blown up," Zoïa wrote, "and we were not allowed to discuss it. The neighbouring villages were evacuated. People who refused to leave were forcibly expelled and their houses were burned down, even though setting fire to the buildings was the last thing that should have been done. We only learned exactly what had happened in 1989, when it began to be talked about in the newspapers and on television. The rumour was that they were going to evacuate our town too, but that would have cost the state so much that they decided to leave us where we were, like laboratory guinea-pigs. . . .

"The places where traces of radioactivity could still be detected were turned into protected zones. But people who didn't know what had happened used to go there to collect mushrooms or berries. There were signs all over the place indicating that they were protected zones, but there was no mention of radioactivity."

Zoïa fell seriously ill not long after the accident. Her husband, who was also affected, is now an invalid. "There is a lot of sickness in our town," she went on, "bronchial asthma, allergies, skin conditions, problems with joints and the digestive tract. We were never measured for levels of radioactive exposure, and doctors refuse to make the connection with the 1957 explosion. But we all think it is the cause of our problems. We no longer trust anyone or anything. Life is terrifying. . . ."

The southern Urals area is the only region of the world to have suffered three nuclear

***Hiroshima,* a painting by 10-year-old Jolja Stepanenko from the Chernobyl region.**

catastrophes. Even before the 1957 explosion, radioactive waste was being dumped directly into the River Techa. A partial evacuation took place when people started falling ill, but others are still living on the river bank. In the spring of 1967 there was a new disaster. A violent wind carried radioactive particles from the dried-up banks of Lake Karachai, which served as an open dump for nuclear waste. Almost a million people suffered to some extent from the radiation.

The southern Urals region is a monstrous radioactive dustbin. Besides the billion curies of radioactivity that have already accumulated there, especially in the open-air reservoirs, there are also deposits of irradiated material stored in containers that are ageing rapidly. These deposits contain plutonium. Nobody is safe from another catastrophe.

Faced by such a terrible prospect, people have naturally not remained idle. One of the most active has been Natalia Mironova, a deputy of the Chelyabinsk regional council, who runs the movement to promote nuclear safety. She is convinced that the world should learn the truth about the Maïak explosion, a disaster comparable in importance with Chernobyl despite the fact that it has been carefully hushed up.

'I want to shout!'

But the Urals is not the only region that can be compared with Chernobyl, to judge from this letter from Semipalatinsk, a city in what is now the state of Kazakhstan: "I don't just want to say it, I want to shout it out loud!" wrote S. Maïdanov, an electrician. "Nowadays there is a lot of talk about Chernobyl. It was a terrible disaster. But we have been living with a similar one since 1949! Until the signing of the nuclear test ban treaty, there were tests here both on the ground and in the air. Only the Ministry of Defence knows how many Hiroshimas there have been in our region. The hydrogen bomb was tested here. And all that over a forty-year period, 100 kilometres from the city. How many lives has it cost us over the years, how many shattered hopes?

"I don't know the figures for infant mortality in the region, but you only have to go to a cemetery to get an idea. Similarly, there is no need to check the statistics on childhood illness. Just go to the paediatricians' surgery and chat with the long queues of mothers whose eyes are worn out with crying. I have more than once heard doctors say that children here suffer from a very high percentage of blood ailments. Many are born with physical and mental deformities. On the ecological map, our region should be painted black."

Unfortunately, there are only too many such black spots on the map, and they keep on spreading. In my survey, I asked readers to appraise the ecological situation of their own regions. Out of a hundred letters chosen at random, nineteen correspondents judged the situation to be catastrophic; forty-three described it as serious; twenty-five as unsatisfactory; twelve as satisfactory; one as good. So two-thirds of my correspondents live in conditions that could be described as difficult at best. Most of them inhabit the great industrial conurbations of the Volga basin, the Ukraine, central Russia, the Urals or Siberia. And all, without exception, think that the situation is getting worse—even those who describe it as already catastrophic, which might seem to suggest that things could not be much worse!

Rusting boats on the dried-up bed of the Aral Sea, which has lost 40 per cent of its surface area since 1960 because of massive irrigation of the cotton fields on its shores. The local fishing industry is now virtually ruined.

I also asked readers to state what caused them most concern. "The forests! The fields! The rivers! The blue sky! Life!" answered V. Sergeev, a schoolboy from the city of Nizhnekamsk. Health was the greatest concern of those who wrote to me, and particularly children's health, which preoccupied all the women. Even though the medical authorities refuse to make the connection between the state of the environment and health, no-one is fooled.

"The condition of the atmosphere is alarming," wrote one anonymous correspondent from Dzerzhinsk, a heavy-chemicals industrial

centre near the Volga. "The town is full of asthmatics and people with lung infections. My son suffers from chronic bronchitis and asthma. The water is just as bad. It affects the teeth and kidneys. My daughter has been ill since early childhood. Her teeth are completely black. One person in two suffers from allergies."

She went on to draw a terrible conclusion: "I can't stop wondering where it will all end. I also feel that childless women are less to blame than I am, for having condemned two to live exposed and defenceless in this filthy swamp. The children are sick, losing their hair, dying. If their mother works in a chemical plant, they are poisoned even in the womb. People just give up, they all think there's nothing more they can do. . . ."

Many letters came from the Volga area. What was once Russia's great river is now disfigured by gigantic dams and transformed into a sewer for military and industrial waste. "We don't bathe in the Volga any more," wrote F. Babicheva, who lives near Volgograd; "we don't eat fish from it, and at night, the air around it is not fit to breathe. It is particularly bad on holidays, when no-one is around and the factories dispose of polluting wastes. In summer, when it rains, the leaves on the trees turn black, the vines lose their leaves, cucumbers and tomatoes shrivel up. It's not water that falls from the sky but acid." From Volgograd itself, E. Sokhina, a geographer, added: "We are seeing here a significant increase in the number of malignant growths. This is a stark index of the quality of the water, of the atmosphere, of foodstuffs and of genetic modifications."

'Each year there are 5,000 more cancer cases'

There were also many letters from Siberia. V. Kleinina, a lecturer at the Tomsk Polytechnic Institute, wrote that "This catastrophic situation is a result of the industrialization of the war years, of ill-thought-out decisions by the authorities, of the incapacity and irresponsibility of our rulers. The city was founded in 1604 on the banks of the Tom, a river that used to be renowned for the abundance and beauty of its fish-stocked waters. Now it might just as well be called the Carbolic Acid. Cancers, stomach problems and kidney ailments have all increased by leaps and bounds." It is the same story in Vladivostok, according to a doctor who reported that "each year there are 5,000 more cancer cases".

Every letter described the same ecological problems, and told the same grim story of misery and despair. Only the name of the town or village changes. It is worth quoting one more witness, however. "I'm seventeen . . . I have to live here and bring up my children. I'm frightened for the next generation: what will be left for it?" The words are those of Natasha Chernikova, who lives in a small town in the Ukraine and dreams of becoming a doctor.

I was in the Ukraine for the fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, in April 1991. I visited Zitomir, one of the regions which suffered the most from radiation. Our guide was Inna Smirnova, who is involved with the aid organization that groups together the various local associations protecting the rights of the residents of the affected districts and who devotes her time to bringing visitors from all parts of the world to the sites, so they can see the results of the disaster with their own eyes and understand what happened.

She took us to Narodichi, a large village full of flower gardens but a place where no-one can live any more. In the centre of the village, now almost abandoned, there is a new type of monument: the scorched trunk of a huge fir-tree decorated with a black cross, a peal of bells on a wooden frame, black tombstones. Only the stones do not bear people's names but the names of dead towns and villages, wiped out for ever by radiation.

In the Narodichi area alone, 13,000 people—about half the population—have been evacuated. I recently received an article written by a doctor from the district. In 1990 the mortality rate was

Chimneys belch smoke from a paper factory at Bratsk in Siberia, part of a lumber industry complex.

twice the birth rate. Of the twenty-two subdivisions of the Zitomir administrative region, only four have seen their population grow, and those only slightly. In all the others, the number of deaths has exceeded the births. Zitomir is experiencing a long death-agony. And the story is much the same in many other regions, not all of them necessarily affected by radiation.

Arousing the survival instinct

What can we women do in face of such a threat? First of all, we must do all we can to sound the alarm and wake the dormant survival instinct of the human race, first and foremost among the representatives of the stronger sex that hold power, and yet seem singularly powerless. Sadly, convincing evidence of this fact was provided on 14 March 1990, during a stormy session of the Third Extraordinary Congress of Deputies of the USSR. The subject at issue was the Constitutional Law defining the role of the President of the Soviet Union. A. A. Zakharenko, the head of a school in the Ukraine, made an emotional speech to the assembly. "I would ask the Praesidium and the Congress to pay the closest possible attention to my proposal," he said, referring to his suggestion that the performance of the President of the USSR should be evaluated annually on the basis of such criteria as the health and longevity of the population, which constitute qualitative and quantitative parameters of the community's legacy to the next generation. Two-thirds of the deputies voted against the amendment, which was rejected.

My own belief is that ecology will ultimately determine the future of the democratic changes in my country. Everything will eventually boil down to the question of whether we manage to survive physically and safeguard the health of our children. We cannot afford, as is often suggested, to concentrate on solving our economic problems before even thinking about ecological problems. The two are closely linked, and the situation is so critical that we may react too late.

This is what we women must first understand if we are to obtain rapid and effective action from the new institutions of government. We must demand that the country should move immediately to a path of peaceful development, and reject colossal military expenditure, atomic bombs and other even more sophisticated weapons, the arms trade, the priority given to heavy industry ever since Bolshevik days, and huge, destructive projects.

Instead let us insist on the rapid adoption of a survival strategy that would give priority to physical and moral health and to the safeguard of the natural and cultural bases of life. For myself, I would include as a basic part of this strategy the abandoning of nuclear energy, an enormous and tragic error on the part of humanity. Then, too, we must ensure that the wise Ukrainian deputy's criteria for presidential evaluation are put into practice. It would also doubtless be sensible to create special power structures—and why not a Women's Parliament?—to defend the rights of women and children and to propose an alternative, crucial for humanity's future, to the male military and technocratic model that has brought the world to the edge of the abyss.

My country's misfortune is that of all humanity, which suffers from the same sicknesses and the same ecological catastrophes. It is just that for us the processes have been speeded up by historical circumstances and have reached their logical conclusion here sooner than anywhere else. But some people have still not understood that message. Maybe it was to make us listen to reason that the Chernobyl bell tolled. ■

MARIA CHERKASOVA,
a Russian journalist and biologist specializing in environmental problems, is also director of the Centre of Independent Ecological Programmes of the Socio-Ecological Union in Moscow. She has published more than a hundred articles and books.

Kenya's Green Belt Movement

by Wangari Maathai

A community-based project created and directed by women

THOUSANDS of Kenyan women are today playing an active part in a nationwide environmental protection campaign which takes the tree as a symbol of hope and an indicator of what must be done to conserve the environment and ensure development that meets today's needs without jeopardizing the world of tomorrow.

The campaign is being waged by the Green Belt Movement, which was launched in 1977 under the auspices of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) as a grassroots struggle against desertification, deforestation, soil loss and fuelwood scarcity. Its main practical objective is to halt desertification by encouraging tree planting and soil and water conservation in rural communities. At the same time it is committed to increasing public awareness of the relationship between environmental degradation and such issues as poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and the mismanagement of natural resources, and the impact of these problems on the political and economic situation throughout Africa.

A tree nursery of the Green Belt Movement near Nairobi.

The story of the Green Belt Movement began in 1977 when a small group of NCWK members launched a tree-planting project called "Save the Land Harambee". (Harambee is a Swahili expression which means "let's all pull together"). We had no tree nursery, no staff and no funds, only a conviction that there was a role for ordinary country people in efforts to solve environmental problems.

We held our first tree-planting ceremony in Nairobi on 5 June 1977, World Environment Day. From then on interest in the project grew rapidly, and soon people from all over the country were asking us where they could find tree seedlings.

To help them we approached the Department of Forestry in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, which has a national network of tree nurseries. The head of the Department laughed when we told him that we intended to plant a million trees, and without hesitation promised us all the seedlings we needed. Less than a year later he had to go back on his decision when he found that we had distributed more seedlings than he could afford to give away. From then on we had to pay for seedlings from government nurseries—fortunately at low prices and with useful guidance and support from government foresters.

The project grew by leaps and bounds. In the last fourteen years over a thousand nurseries have been established at which women grow seedlings that are then released to small farmers and to public institutions such as schools and churches. The women are paid for the seedlings they grow,

If you are interested in supporting the Green Belt Movement you should write to:
The Green Belt Movement,
P.O. Box 67545, Nairobi, Kenya

Above, cover of a brochure produced by the Green Belt Movement. Right, Kenyan village women get together to try to continue food production for their families on land earmarked for the cultivation of sugar cane on a commercial scale.

and many jobs have been created, mostly in the rural areas. To date some 10 million trees have been planted and have survived—a survival rate of about 70-80 per cent. Up to 80,000 women are today involved in work at nursery sites.

The trees have been planted to meet immediate community needs—to provide fuelwood and material for fencing and building, and to give shade. Gradually, however, people learned that trees also prevent soil erosion and the consequent loss of soil fertility. They came to see the link between loss of soil fertility, poor crop yields and famine.

The Green Belt Movement harnesses local expertise and resources and encourages communities to stand on their own feet. We deliberately discourage direct participation by high-powered technicians and managers from outside. We want to create confidence in local people who are often overwhelmed by experts and come to think that they are incapable and backward.

The aims of the Green Belt Movement are inspired by the needs and problems of Kenya—we encourage, for instance, the use of indigenous trees and shrubs in order to help protect the genetic resources of Kenya's different ecological zones (see box). Four years ago, however, our Movement entered a new phase of its activities when it approached a number of other countries in eastern and southern Africa and launched what will, it is hoped, become an All-Africa Green Belt Movement Network. Our objectives are valid for many other countries, not only in Africa but elsewhere in the world. ■

WANGARI MAATHAI, of Kenya, is the founder and co-ordinator of the Green Belt movement. She has received many awards for her work, most recently the 1991 Africa Prize.

Seven steps to conservation

In our 15 years of field experience in Kenya, we have developed a procedure for spreading the conservation message that has produced good results. The elements of this procedure, listed below, may also work in other developing countries.

• The message should respond to a local need.
Most people in developing countries are poor and concerned about basic needs such as food, water, firewood and clothing. Conservation cannot be presented to them as a luxury issue. The Green Belt Movement introduces the idea of environmental conservation through trees because trees meet many basic needs of rural communities. We encourage small farmers to plant trees to meet their own needs, and as we work with them we try to help them appreciate that trees also do a lot for their communities and for the country as a whole.

• The message must make good sense.
How is it possible to explain the importance of protecting genetic resources to members of a women's group, most of whom are illiterate?

We explain that trees which have survived in a certain part of the country since time immemorial are better suited to our environment than recently introduced foreign trees. We often ask members of women's groups to list the ways in which they or their parents use local trees—as a source of medicine, perhaps, or as pest-resistant wood, or in traditional ceremonies. This type of discussion helps to make the environment seem a real and living part of their community life.

• The project must be honest.
If the members of a community feel that a project is honestly run and designed specifically to benefit them, they will support it.

• The project should work patiently to motivate communities.
Spreading the conservation message is a slow process. It is not easy to motivate rural communities, but if they come to believe in your own motivation they will begin to walk along with you and eventually to work on their own for the message.

• Ensure that the project offers some short-term successes.
It is important for people to see some success stories within a reasonable period of time. Developing both short-term and long-term objectives will create momentum for a project. When a Green Belt nursery is set up, for example, the first crop of tree seedlings are released to the community within three to six months. The women's group responsible for the nursery then receives compliments and gains respect from the community.

• Try to reach the decision-makers as well as reaching the rural communities.
Decision-makers in the developing world often pay lip service to conservation. Without their support, however, it is impossible to take the conservation message effectively to rural communities. Decision-makers must realize that they will benefit if the masses work to prevent desertification.

The message should thus be taken to the powerful and to the communities almost simultaneously. Even though it may take a long time before the support of decision-makers is more than rhetorical, it is essential that they should give a verbal commitment to the project. Rural communities will be even more enthusiastic about the project if their leaders are supportive.

• Create a forum for continuous dialogue.
In taking the message to rural communities, the teachers must also become the pupils. We all have much to learn from each other. There must be continuing dialogue until people believe that the protection of our world is for the benefit of all. ■

The task before us

by Joan Martin-Brown

WOMEN and the environment both provide societies with shadow subsidies; each is an undervalued resource. Yet after all these years we are still talking about the difficulty of putting dollar signs on the value of nature and female labour.

In many communities civic concern about the environment is the "Trojan Horse" for citizen participation in local decision-making, and many of the most courageous actors are women. In many nations their commitment to live in harmony with nature and to respect its capacity to support life means questioning 300 years or more of the compartmentalization of knowledge and its separation from values. The process has gone so far that today we try to divide urban from rural policy and national from global realities.

Throughout history women have been the integrators, the thread linking children and the elderly, home and the resources of the community, the fruits of the field and the products people use. If we are to survive the twenty-first century and beyond, we must draw on their skill to reconnect many disciplines the better to perceive the relationships between them. We need to share the countrywoman's knowledge of foodstuffs, of flora and of fauna with the botanist, the genetic expert, the technologist, the pharmacist, the agricultural expert, and the engineer who builds roads and dams in rural areas. We need woman's voice in the design of habitats, whether urban or rural, for around the world she is the primary dweller. Male perceptions of social priorities and approaches to solving environmental problems need to be enlightened and augmented by the perceptions of women. By their inclusion, the prospects for human development may be doubled.

In recent times, many cultures and nations have striven to dominate nature, to act as if they are not part of it. Concurrently men and women have found themselves increasingly cut off from their children and communities. This is the exact opposite of the situation in traditional cultures and agrarian societies. We are the first generation

"Those who are in positions of leadership have a special duty to support people in the front lines of environmental crises. They must raise their voices for the voiceless." Below, women and children near Rosso in Mauritania.

to put ourselves, through our self-indulgent ways, in direct and deliberate competition with our children and their future.

Women must assert themselves to achieve peace with nature. More and more they now occupy positions of influence. Those who are in positions of leadership have a special duty to support people in the front lines of environmental crises. They must raise their voices for the voiceless.

Women must turn their attention, too, to the decision-making processes which cause environmental destruction. They must be prepared to educate others. Men have pretended for too long that they can conquer nature; women can show them how to conquer the future by placing their decisions and activities within the context of what nature can tolerate. This means no longer confusing needs and wants. What people *need*, the environment was designed to provide. What people *want* may put us all under sentence of death.

All this can be changed. The human capacity needed to heal the world is not lacking within the community of women. The ability of women to say "no" is alive and well. They must say "no" to inappropriate development. They must say "no" to industries which expect public money to clean up what should not have been despoiled in the first place, or expect the vast subsidies of public taxes and growing bureaucracies to deal with pollution. Women must say "no" to the death and disease borne by contaminated land, air and water systems. Only by women saying "no" in this way can the world have hope in saying "yes" to future generations. ■

JOAN MARTIN-BROWN, of the United States, has for more than 25 years held posts in U.S. and international organizations dedicated to protecting the environment and improving the status of women. In 1991 she served as co-ordinator of the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment, organized in Miami by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WorldWIDE Network, which she founded.

The Global Assembly of Women and the Environment

BOMBARDED by news of oil spills, contamination by toxic wastes and all kinds of environmental hazards, people often wonder what they as individuals can do about it all. Quite a lot, was the answer given recently by women from seventy countries who met at a Global Assembly of Women and the Environment to share their experiences of working to combat environmental degradation.

The Assembly, held in Miami, Florida, from 4 to 8 November 1991, was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WorldWIDE Network, an international non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing women in environmental management. It aimed, in the words of Dr. Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director of UNEP, to "establish benchmarks for how men and women can work together in specific ways to help solve national, regional and global environmental problems."

Over 200 projects presented at the Assembly showed how women have taken the lead in heading off all kinds of environmental disasters. These accomplishments, chosen because they were "affordable, repeatable and sustainable", ranged from the design of smokeless stoves, solar cookers and solar greenhouses to action against environmentally harmful projects such as dams that would have eroded fertile soil and threatened drinking-water supplies, and road construction that threatened to cause flooding.

Two projects, one from Asia and one from Latin America, illustrate the kind of action being undertaken. In India's Andhra Pradesh state, the degradation of productive land had led to the erosion of topsoil and the choking of water drainage systems, causing salinity, loss of food crops and increasing unemployment in the villages. Led by a local woman called Vasanth Kanibera, groups of village women decided to pool their resources and lease degraded land. No bank was prepared to lend them money, but they managed to raise a loan from a development society.

They then revived the land by the use of traditional farming methods in place of heavily-subsidized, market-oriented, mono-crop agriculture. The techniques they employed meant that there was no loss of topsoil, of crop diversity or of wasted rainwater. The project eventually involved 400 women in twenty villages. In three years, 700 acres of land were restored to productive use. The project was so economically and ecologically sound that the Government of India endorsed it for the entire state of Andhra Pradesh.

Meanwhile, across the world in Brazil, a woman doctor's investigation of a metallurgy factory that had operated for two decades without proper controls provided a case-study of successful action against industrial pollution. The factory had been emitting so much lead and cadmium into the atmosphere that the surrounding area's cadmium levels were found to be the highest in the world and its lead levels among the world's worst. A local river had also been despoiled by industrial wastes. Worse, the factory had been offering free "dret" (powdered wastes left after lead extraction) to poor families for paving gardens, backyards and roads. It had also distributed, free of charge, used filters from factory chimneys, which were put to use as bedspreads and rugs. Ten per cent of the children living near the factory were considered highly intoxicated by lead and cadmium poisoning and another 17 per cent at risk. Intoxication causes brain and kidney damage.

The doctor, Tania Tavares, took the lead in investigating and rectifying the situation. Under her direction a team of scientists and students of chemistry, biology and medicine from the University of Bahia researched the problem and proposed guidelines and solutions to local authorities.

The factory management was obliged to reduce the emissions of lead and cadmium and to accept responsibility for the medical care of poisoned children and adults. Lead levels were subsequently reduced by about 38 per cent and cadmium levels by 68 per cent. Nonetheless, the local population continued to show high levels of exposure, and Dr. Tavares and her team are still pursuing their investigation. ■

Miuda's world

by Grazia Borrini

Reconciling local and global issues in environmental care

I met Maria Carvalho last summer, in a squatter settlement in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. Maria, who likes to be called Miuda, is forty-three years old, illiterate, and a grandmother of eight children. She, her husband and four daughters (the last one two years old) illegally occupy the land on which they live. All her other children, old enough to be married and away from home, live in other illegal settlements.

Miuda was born in the countryside, where her father owned a small farm. The whole family worked in the fields, growing crops and tending a few cows and goats. Life was not bad then, but her father fell ill and the family had to sell the land to a cattle ranching company. The money did not last long, and Miuda, then six years old, was taken in by a family in a nearby town. She got lodging and food in exchange for minor domestic work.

At age fourteen Miuda married and gave birth to a daughter. Her husband abandoned her two years later. When she was eighteen she met her present companion, Antonio, and moved in with him. With Antonio she had fourteen children, but only nine are still alive (the others died in infancy or childhood). In 1969 Antonio decided to move to Salvador in search of a good job. A construction company hired him as an unskilled worker on a limited time contract.

A year later Miuda and the children joined him, and the family settled in a rented flat in the suburbs. Miuda did domestic work, took care of the children and washed clothes to earn a small income. Yet there was never enough money. The family had to move several times, every time to a cheaper and worse living arrangement. In May 1977 Antonio got seriously sick and could not work at all. With no money to pay the rent, the family had to move to a squatter settlement.

Miuda bought the lot on which they now live from Mr. Bahia, a previous illegal resident who had weeded the area and so gained some sort of "right" over it. The lot, close to a brook at the bottom of a hill, looked like a swamp, and Miuda and Antonio had to fill it with earth before building a mud home. There was some sort of water supply (a well not far away) but no sanitation, no road, no rain drainage, no electricity and no garbage collection. The sewers from the housing schemes on top of the hill discharged openly into the brook, and every time the rain got heavy (a frequent event in the tropics) the mud home was flooded with sewage water.

In 1983, after heavy rain, floods and constant water infiltrations, the house of Miuda and Antonio fell to pieces. With the support of a local organization they joined other residents, and all of them asked the municipality to help them rebuild their houses. Initially, only the local organization gave any concrete help, but a few months later the municipality also provided some construction material. Now Miuda's house has brick walls (the pavement is still pressed earth), but the infiltration persists and the water around the house has to be drained almost every day. Miuda still works, washing clothes for other people; her husband gets sporadic jobs. She and a few other illegal residents are quite active in petitioning authorities for services, but they have the feeling that no-one listens to them. As a whole, the community is apathetic, without any form of organization.

Miuda believes that life in Salvador is better than in the countryside because town people can work and earn some money. Also, some of her children went to school (she gave this information with pride). She likes to live in the settlement and will leave the area only if forced to do so. Yet she feels insecure, even after having been

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Above, a relatively well-organized recent squatter settlement on a hillside in Salvador de Bahia (Brazil). Left, garden plots have been planted among the shacks.

a resident for thirteen years. There are frequent rumours that the police will come, destroy the illegal shelters and send the people away. She says that many families tried to leave the area to find a better place to live, but most had to come back because of economic difficulties. Miuda feels sick and tired, and looks much older than her age.

The story of Miuda is anything but exceptional. Like her, millions of poor people around the world bear with courage and ingenuity a daily burden of personal misery, lack of social support and environmental problems.

Local and global issues

You and I, and Miuda, her husband and her friends, will all suffer from the consequences of global environmental problems. We all are, or will be, affected by the thinning of stratospheric ozone, the disruption of the Earth's climate, the depletion of non-renewable resources and the loss of unique habitats and the genetic diversity that goes with them. But while you and I can dedicate time and resources to discussing and trying to solve these problems, can Miuda afford to do so? Can she worry about the disappearance of local plant varieties if her family must clear some forest to set up a home in a decent place? Can her husband be concerned about throwing used car oil in the brook, when every day he has to drain someone else's sewage from his home? Can we ask them to worry about worldwide population growth and plan their families accordingly, when their children are their best helpers and friends, and their only support in old age?

Environmental advocates and policy-makers should consider these questions before drawing up plans for environmental protection. No amount of education will get people to care about environmental problems that affect us all when no-one helps them solve the problems they face alone. In other words, is it at all effective, let alone efficient, to concentrate our attention on global issues when so many local issues are left unresolved?

To date, the main focus of environmental concerns has been on large-scale problems such as the hole in the ozone layer or oil spills in the oceans. The media, environmental groups and the public at large are highly concerned about such issues, and those concerns have even helped to achieve difficult international agreements in a relatively short time. On the other hand, local environmental problems that are directly felt by particular communities and rooted in local contexts appear less interesting and are usually neglected or subsumed under headings like sanitation, housing or agriculture, which share little of the current glamour of environmental affairs.

It is not difficult to understand this phenomenon. Global problems are impressive.

In Salvador, homeless families burn forest to make room for more squatter dwellings.

They are relatively few in number, clearly defined, and affect, actually or potentially, human multitudes. On the contrary, most local problems are prosaic. There are many of them. They are ill-defined and complicated by a variety of local factors. Moreover, each local problem affects only a limited number of people. Yet it affects these people today, unequivocally and often severely. And since there are so many local problems and they are interconnected, their total impact on human health, economic resources and ecological surival is huge.

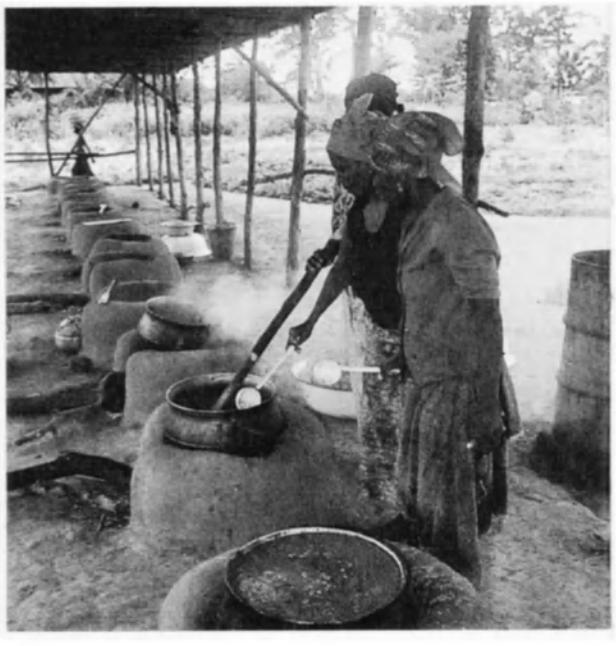
Two basic considerations. The first is that the problems facing Miuda and her neighbours also concern the municipality as a whole, which faces rising costs (for instance for health care and police surveillance) and gathers little revenue from the squatters. Also, the land value is affected by the environmental degradation, and the polluted brook (lost as a source of usable water) goes to increase the pollution of Salvador's beaches and sea. In fact, the economy, social life and ecology of the whole city and region surrounding it are in many ways related to the presence and current fast growth of squatter settlements. Local environmental problems easily feed into municipal, regional and even national problems!

The second consideration is that for Miuda—and for many other people in similar situations—issues related to the physical and the socio-economic environment are not neatly stacked in different piles but are perceived as a whole. Solving local environmental problems means solving basic needs problems, and vice versa. For instance, as long as the water supply remains illegal and sporadic, there will be fights with the neighbours and little opportunity to improve the hygienic habits of the children. As long as there is an open-air sewage discharge nearby, the squatters will not build or use latrines. Without security of tenure and social recognition, no-one will invest time and money to improve the family shelters or the common areas in the settlement. With no hygiene and poor shelters people will easily get sick, will work less and less productively, become poorer and have even less hope of securing a piece of land for themselves.

The women in Miuda's community could organize themselves and start some income-generating activity, but they will not manage to do so as long as they do not know where to leave their children or how to take care of the financial and legal requirements of an association. Having neither land nor money to set up a shelter, they will not be able to organize a self-run kindergarten. And they all have many children and very little money.

Community empowerment

The only hope seems to be the empowerment of Miuda herself and the whole squatter community. This is a lesson learnt from innumerable past experiences. Problems such as the ones mentioned above can be solved only with the full involvement of local people, as individuals, groups and community organizations. I use the



term "empowerment" to indicate an increased, active control over the factors affecting life and well-being.

What does this mean for Miuda? It means that if she is to have any hope of improving the life of her family and community she should not wait for solutions to be provided by distant authorities, but begin with a gathering of her neighbours to discuss common problems, identify resources and organize possible solutions. This process is likely to involve the creation of ad-hoc groups or formal community organizations to pool resources and face international bodies. For instance, a legal Residents' Association in Miuda's community would have a good chance of solving at least one of the most pressing problems of the squatters, namely land tenure.

Primary environmental care

In light of the above considerations and from a wealth of experience in community development and local environmental action, some basic requirements have been identified and grouped as a strategy of Primary Environmental Care (PEC). PEC is defined as a process by which local communities, with various degrees of external support, organize themselves and strengthen, enrich and apply their own means and capacities for the care of their environment while simultaneously satisfying their needs.

The basic ideas behind PEC are not new, and to many they may appear as simply good common sense. What is new is the attempt to lend strong support to an approach that integrates different concerns and builds upon the understanding of two key ideas: that community-based environmental management is essential for local as well as national and global environments and economies; and that for such management to succeed, environmental, social and economic objectives must be combined, and pursued with the full involvement of the affected groups and individuals.

Who should do what to set the PEC strategy in motion? The peculiarity of problems and solutions characteristic of local contexts and the very definition of community empowerment preclude a meaningful general answer to such a question. Yet very few local communities can succeed without external help. As things are today, governments are the prime partners in PEC, and they are indispensable. They need to allow the process to happen, and provide the legislation and sectoral services essential to sustain it. Above all, governments should ensure that communities have both access to natural resources and security of tenure, since it is only when tenure is secured that long-term commitments can be made and environmental improvements emerge.

Even when political conditions are favourable, however, most communities still need external support for specific initiatives. They may need access to information, technology, credit or training in new skills and practices (e.g. methods in agro-ecology, small business management, low-cost housing, sanitation and disaster preparedness).

But external support is not enough. Community empowerment is a process that requires the contribution of all community members and it can only grow along with their sense of social identity. The community should organize, identify its own problems and resources and try out different initiatives to discover what is best for the local situation. Needless to say, obstacles will arise, such as conflicts among different groups within the community or between the community and external stakeholders.

Some solutions are at hand—at least in terms of awareness and capacities—but in many cases the institutional and behavioural changes needed to put them into practice are likely to take a long time. History teaches us that it is a long way from ethics to ethos. And this is why "strategies" are needed. To give visibility, legitimacy, incentive and impulse to what needs to be done. ■

Women make palm oil (left) and attend a functional literacy class (right). Both activities are part of a UNESCO educational project for Togolese women.

Beyond the consumer society

Japan's Seikatsu Club

TWENTY years ago only two kinds of toothbrush were available in Japan—one kind for adults and one kind for children. Ten years ago, the children's market was divided up. There were brushes designed for infants, brushes for kindergarten pupils, brushes for primary schoolchildren, and brushes for secondary-school students. Today, market segmentation has gone even further, and you can buy toothbrushes for one- to three-year-olds, two- to four-year-olds, three- to five-year-olds, and four- to six-year-olds—not to mention separate brushes for the front teeth, the back teeth, bridges and interdental spaces.

And yet Japanese dentists are still as busy as ever, for the fact is that the proliferation of toothbrushes has had no effect in combating tooth decay. Dentists still say what they have always said, that the important thing is for people to spend sufficient time cleaning their teeth—seven minutes a day is a figure often suggested. But in Japan's consumer society advice from dentists is not enough. Consumers must be persuaded to buy products by advertising.

The morning shampoo is another example of consumerism in the Japanese personal-hygiene industry. In spite of many warnings about the dangers of washing one's hair too often, a daily morning shampoo has become fashionable, particularly among young people and housewives. The shampoo industry has latched onto an opportunity to extend its market, not just by selling more of the core product but also by marketing such incidentals as specially-designed morning-shampoo basins and towels. (The latter have been tested for water absorption and found to be no different from any others.)

The side-effects of this commercial bonanza include a 50-per-cent increase in the volume of water used per family in the mornings, and increased pollution caused by flushing away the active ingredients in the shampoo. Many young people are suffering premature hair loss as a result of washing their hair too often. The big profits from the morning-shampoo market have gone to private corporations, but the costs of cleaning up the water have been paid by the public in taxes.

The Japanese food industry has grown fat on Japan's affluence, and because of market saturation now finds it difficult to launch new products. The latest catchwords are "fresh" and "perishable". Even *sake*, wine and beer are described as perishable. They should, it is suggested, be decanted straight from the bottle into the glass.

Consumers who know no better are persuaded by the "perishable" label to buy more foodstuffs, even products that may have been heat-treated to conserve them. As a result, market volume is boosted, but at the cost of increased dumping of products suspected by their purchasers, perhaps wrongly, of having gone off. Consumers thus play into the hands of manufacturers, who encourage them to consume to the hilt and then throw things away.

Food has become a commodity like any other. Transplanted to cities, farmers forget how to farm and children do not learn how to grow things. City kids can be forgiven for thinking that tomatoes and peppers are produced in greengrocers' shops and that the cows back home on the land are creatures of myth. The inhabitants of Third-World countries where lobsters are trapped cannot afford to eat them, but must export them to Japan, where only parts of the head are eaten and the rest is thrown away.

Reforming the structures of consumption

We Japanese, a century after our Industrial Revolution, are in danger of becoming puppets of the market economy, but this trend is not going unchallenged. One organization which is trying to do something about the situation is the Seikatsu

The Seikatsu Club, which takes its name from the Japanese word meaning "life", was founded in 1968 by 200 Tokyo women who wanted to fight inflation. Today it is a major network of non-profit-making co-operatives that has 400,000 members in Japan and 300 representatives on local councils. The Club, 80 per cent controlled by women, seeks to bring consumers and producers closer together and promote the distribution of natural, high-quality, "environmentally-friendly" products. It also encourages debate and action on other social issues such as the status of women, working conditions and the problems of old people.

Top, members of the Seikatsu Club tour one of the Club's dairies.
Above, in a Tokyo street, demonstrators show how to make home-made soap from used cooking oil.
Left, shoppers appraise the wares at an organic-food market in the Japanese capital.

Club, a 400,000-strong consumers' co-operative.

Actually, we do not call ourselves consumers. The word itself derives from the Latin *consumere*, "to take up wholly, to consume, waste, squander or destroy". It acquired its present meaning with the development of industrial capitalism, which saw the consumer as a passive receiver of publicity and advertising, which by awakening wants and needs dreamed up by the corporations would link mass consumption to mass production.

In the Seikatsu Club, we reject this commercial definition of consumerism. Instead we see ourselves as autonomous individuals forming an integral part of the whole cycle of production, distribution and disposal.

The Club has pioneered the joint purchase of essential goods in Japan. Its members are referred to not as consumers—by implication, passive acceptors of merchandise—but as "the living people". We speak of "necessities of life" rather than of consumer goods, rejecting a term that implies production in the name of profit and that fails to recognize the link between consumer and producer.

We want to speak out against the evils of industrialized society, and also to create a sustainable communal society in its place. We hope to breathe fresh life into the idea of a lifestyle of individual autonomy in co-operation with others.

We think of the Club as a weapon: the power to buy also implies the power not to buy, in other words to boycott. Our goal is not just to offer safe consumer goods at reduced prices, or to pass on organic or environmentally-friendly produce at rather higher prices, in the name of an intelligent and well-informed consumerism. On the contrary, we want to reform the structures of consumption in depth.

The joint buying system aims to focus the power of our members so as only to purchase necessities produced by like-minded producers. We hold joint discussions about the disclosure of ingredients, additives and, where applicable, processing measures and pesticides employed, thereby establishing direct linkage between consumers and producers. We aim to create an alternative market, one in which value-added and surplus-value-added profits do not increase costs. In our Club only the intrinsic value of the product matters.

An alternative lifestyle

We will not buy synthetic detergents, which harm the environment, nor chemically-flavoured foods nor products we consider inessential. We do buy soap, 100-per-cent fresh orange juice and the dried bonito used to make *miso* soup. We purchase reusable bottles and cans but not plastic containers. We have two dairy farms of our own, and our members collect used cooking oil in their workplaces to form the basis for natural soaps.

The next step is to extend the principles of the Club as the basis of a universal alternative lifestyle. Therein, we believe, lies the key to instilling the new values society needs. Furthermore, the Club's style of co-operative action can also be used as a tool to reform political, educational and cultural institutions.

The goal is for every individual in the Club to think for him- or herself, and to act independently in order to create a new civil society based on the slogan "Autonomy in Life". We are calling on our neighbours to join us in doing so; for this form of struggle is the best way to say goodbye to the consumer society once and for all. ■

'Homes not slums'

by Marta Trejos

A self-help project that built a sense of community as well as decent housing for homeless families

GUARARÍ, a housing complex built five years ago on the outskirts of San José, the capital of Costa Rica, is the result of an extraordinary experiment undertaken by a group of women who campaigned under the slogan: "Homes, not slums". Their daily struggle against poverty gave them some ideas for solving their housing problems.

The women represented more than 30,000 families, most of which were of rural origin. They missed the fresh air of the countryside, and wanted to do something about the problems of urban overcrowding.

The building and town-planning regulations applied by the authorities recreated in new housing projects the urban structures that had given rise to shanty-towns. The women reacted strongly to this and rejected official housing programmes. "We want a house to live in, not a roof to sleep under," they proclaimed. "We need a school and a dispensary nearby; we want our children to be able to play in safety, climb trees and enjoy nature; we want jobs."

The homeless families seemed to regard all social problems as interlinked. They wanted to get rid of the shanty-towns, and at the same time they wanted to make sure that their families were properly fed and their health and education needs were provided for. They fought for genuine improvements in their living conditions along with their new housing.

Lending a hand

The women were helped by the Feminist Information and Action Centre (CEFEMINA), an institution dedicated to the defence of the rights of women which had already backed similar projects in several other Costa Rican towns. To get a house in the new development, each family had to put in 700 hours' work. Not all this time necessarily had to be spent on the building site. Other options included looking after children, preparing collective meals, and serving on committees concerned with such matters as health, legal questions and the environment.

A volunteer group of women technicians designed a new type of housing to meet the needs expressed by the women of Guararí. Government experts yielded to pressure from them, especially since the projects the women put forward were less costly than the alternatives.

Next the women buckled down to the construction of the houses. No task was too hard for them. They took everything in hand, from directing the teams of workers to providing building materials and organizing the thousands of volunteers who gave up their spare time to work on the project. At weekends the site was

MARTA TREJOS,
Costa Rican sociologist, is the Executive Director of the Feminist Information and Action Centre (CEFEMINA) in Costa Rica, and co-ordinator of the "Woman and the Environment" movement in Central America.

Above: "The women buckled down to the construction of their houses. No task was too hard for them."
Left: "Everyone lent a hand, including the old. . . ."

a hive of activity as people crowded in to help to build the houses. Everyone lent a hand, including the old, the handicapped and children.

During moments of relaxation on the site, the volunteers gave advice to groups of women on such subjects as food hygiene, breast-feeding, birth control, social legislation and sanitation. As a result of this active solidarity, not only did the houses go up in record time but the new community developed a way of life that seems likely to endure.

Contact with nature

Constructed in blocks of a hundred, the houses were built in a variety of forms adapted to the lie of the land. They give onto shared internal courtyards, where trees can grow in sheltered conditions. In this respect, Guararí is a model development, for it has encouraged the protection of numerous endangered plant species, including trees that were formerly associated with coffee growing but are now superfluous because of modern agricultural techniques.

Thanks to its leisure areas and communal green spaces, the Guararí district has plenty of land that everyone can enjoy while keeping up the neighbourly relationships formed during the construction work. The cultivation of vegetables and medicinal plants and animal rearing on a small scale provide jobs and bring in money to finance a variety of activities which are co-ordinated by a large community centre. Known as the *Casa de la mujer* (the Woman's House), the Centre houses a dispensary, a legal advice bureau, a centre for battered women and children, old people's associations and sports and leisure clubs.

Traffic is restricted in Guararí. Most of the roads are for pedestrians only, so that children are shielded from the danger of road accidents and that while they are playing their mothers can keep an eye on them from their kitchen windows.

Modern construction techniques, using materials light enough for women to handle, have also provided a solution to the problem of waste-water disposal. Guararí has a water-treatment plant that cleans effluent before discharging the water into watercourses. The opening of the plant coincided with the launch of an anti-pollution campaign aimed at cleaning up the local rivers. It was decided to protect the basin of the river that crosses the district and to turn it into a park, primarily to save the stream from being used as a public drain that would create social and sanitary problems for the community. The river's flora and fauna have been inventoried and protected. Children learn to live in harmony with nature while playing on the river-bank.

In the course of coping with the difficulties of everyday life, the people of Guararí have found solutions to wider problems, thanks to an active community life and particularly to the dynamism of the womenfolk. The last word should be left to one of them. "Everyone's an expert and an instructor here. We go to specialists for advice so we can find out how to get by without them. We learn from one another, and everyone gets the advantage. Our real triumph is that the entire community now recognizes that bringing women into its public life has benefited everyone." ■

Raising our voices

A leading feminist sets forth her views on the eve of the Earth Summit

"Women have been trained to speak softly and carry a lipstick. Those days are over."

BELLA ABZUG

Women play an important role in rural development in Guinea.

A former member of the U.S. Congress, a lawyer and feminist activist, Bella Abzug has become a leading advocate of environmental security and a more economically just world. As special adviser to Maurice Strong, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), she is encouraging women around the world to speak up and take part in the Conference's decision-making processes.

"I want to see women remobilize on a global scale," she says. "Women are the very core of the environment, which is the *sine qua non* of existence. Women's knowledge, skills, experience and instincts have not been taken into consideration. Yet women, who constitute 50 per cent of the world's population, are also the majority of the world's food producers—80 per cent in Africa, 60 per cent in Asia, 40 per cent in Latin America—as well as its major users and consumers. They are the most concerned about threats to the health of our planet, the most active in cleaning up man-made messes. But women must be more than global housekeepers, and until they are treated equally with men nothing will change.

"I believe women will bring a new vision, with new perspectives as to how and what to change. It's easier with women because they are not part of what has taken place. They are totally unshackled, not only by lack of ownership but by lack of involvement in decisions to date. They are freer and more independent.

"So we are going to strengthen the existing networks of women (of which there are many), not just for the Rio conference but for the next century. Things have to change from the bottom up. I'm involved in organizing international

The logo of the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, held in Miami (USA) in November 1991.

conferences where women come who act locally even while they learn to think globally. I am going to tell people about the need to create a movement to change the world and the conditions for women's self-empowerment.

"The Miami Congress (see box this page) gave women significant strength and a sense of themselves. It brought women together to talk about the interconnection of hunger, disease, poverty, maldevelopment, misallocation of resources, illiteracy, war and peace. None of this is in isolation. Environment and development are connected—sustainable development is only possible in a sound environment. So the agenda we are launching for the twenty-first century is for a world in which we settle disputes peacefully, give priority to health and conquering poverty, disease and illiteracy; in which people are housed and have food and other securities; in which women share equally with men the power to decide what the world looks like, a peaceful world in which to educate our children in an environmentally sound planet.

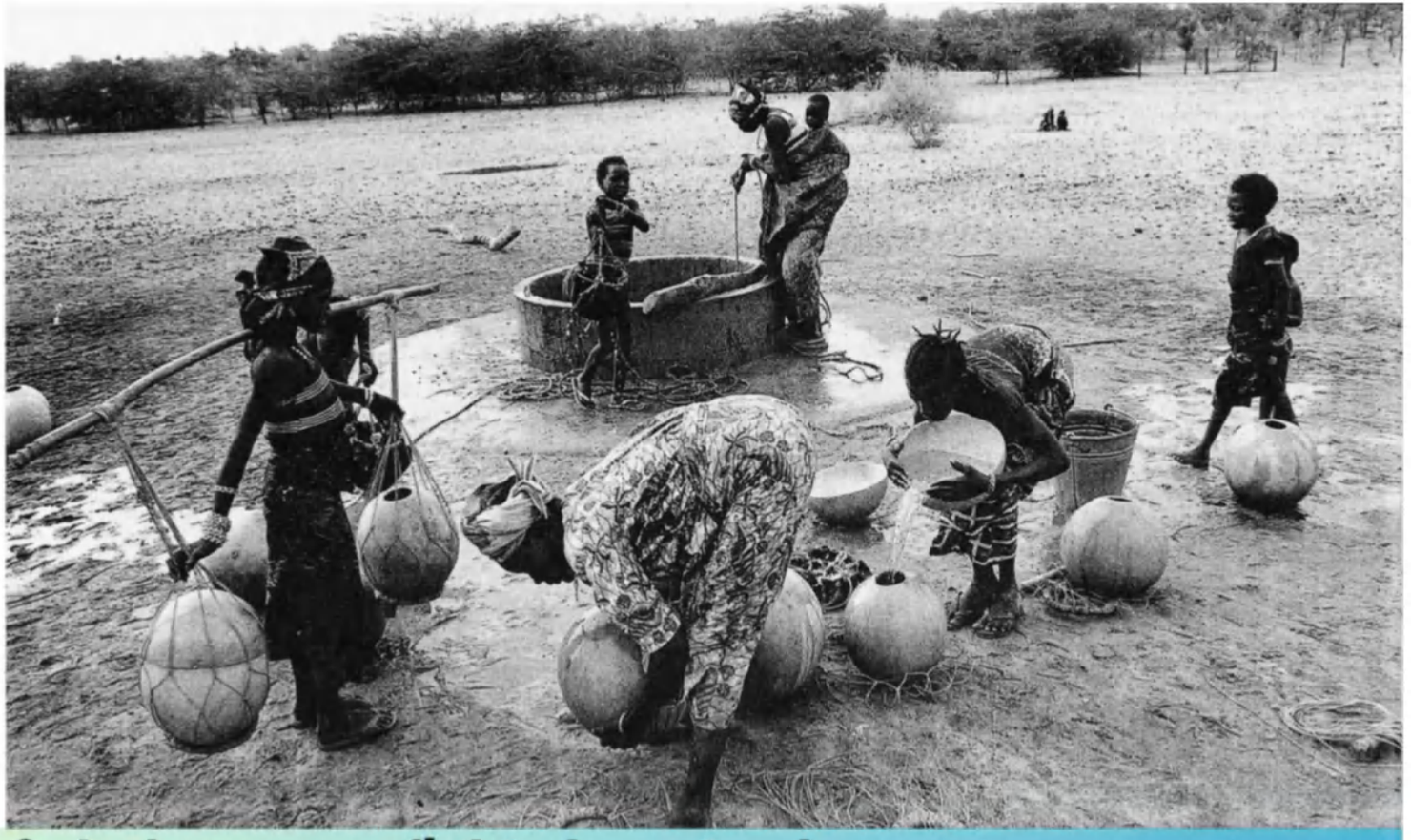
"We have a message for the Heads of State who will attend the Earth Summit. Our message is very simple. We are here to say that this mad race towards self-destruction must stop and the great military powers must show the way by working much harder for peace and disarmament. We are here to say that no country has the right to call itself a democracy when it denies equal participation in policy-making to women. We are here to say that women must be represented at every level, that our exclusion from economic and political power must end.

"I believe that the political empowerment of women may well provide the missing part of the equation that is needed to restore the health of our planet. Over the years, women have lobbied, marched, toiled, pleaded, prayed—there was always music and dancing. But for some time this has stopped. It is now time to start up the music again." ■

The World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet

FOLLOWING on from the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment (see page 27), the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, held in Miami the following week, brought together more than 1,200 women from 83 countries. The Congress was organized by the International Policy Action Committee, a body created by Bella Abzug. It summed up its deliberations in an Action Agenda for the 21st Century, which it described as "a challenge to women and men to work together to create a safe and sustainable future." Some of the major points on the Agenda were:

- To demand full and equal participation for women and men in decision-making and policy implementation at international, national and community levels.
- To recommend that all public policy-making groups contain no more than 60 per cent and no less than 40 per cent of either sex.
- To work for adoption of an International Code of Environmental Conduct by business and industry as well as by governments and UN agencies.
- To demand time-use studies of women's work, including housework and care of children and the elderly.
- To urge governments to agree to a timetable for implementation of full-cost accounting that would include environmental and social costs in both national accounting systems and in calculating subsidies and incentives in international trade.
- To demand an end to nuclear testing and the dismantling of existing nuclear weapons.
- To demand the creation of gender-balanced national civilian commissions to open all military activities and expenditure, including research and development, to public scrutiny.
- To demand that armies be used as environmental protection corps to monitor and repair damage to natural systems.
- To support indigenous people's efforts to protect their natural environments.
- To pledge to use women's consumer power to boycott businesses and institutions that are not eco-conscious, and to support and commend those that are.
- To encourage global networks of women to facilitate the analysis of consumer goods, from the extraction of the raw materials through the production process to their use and disposal.
- To promote environmental ethics education in schools.
- To call for the creation of a permanent gender-balanced UN Commission on Environment and Development to promote environmental awareness and to investigate complaints.
- To call on world leaders attending the 1992 Earth Summit to sign a Global Climate Change Convention, with industrialized countries making a minimum commitment to a 20% reduction of carbon dioxide by the year 2000. ■



Sahel women fight desert advance

A village that owes its survival to its womenfolk

by Joséphine Ouedraogo

KOURFA is a village in the Sahel region of Niger. Since the last great drought some fifteen years ago, it has owed its survival to its womenfolk.

The people of Kourfa, which is situated 260 kilometres north-east of Niamey, are farmers and former herdsmen condemned to a sedentary life because of the degradation of pastureland. Reduced rainfall and the drying-up of watering-places and vegetation, combined with violent sand-storms, have virtually deprived the village of harvests for the past five years. The men have had to travel far away to find seasonal work, and sometimes they have not come back. In 1988, there were only 900 people left in Kourfa, most of them women, children and old people.

It is the women who keep Kourfa alive. Despite the few resources at their disposal, the solitude and the hard physical labour which they are forced to perform because of the absence of their menfolk, they have succeeded in supporting the most vulnerable members of the community, the old people and the children. To survive, they gather dead wood and dry grasses which they sell as fuel in the market at Abala, seven kilometres away. The money they earn enables them to buy some provisions.

Each day brings a new round of domestic tasks. Looking for wood and water is an exhausting business involving several hours' walking and effort beneath an implacable sun. The children suffer from nutritional deficiencies, and the nearest chemist is seventeen kilometres away.

Until 1984 the village had only one well, 60 metres deep and overused, which barely sufficed for the domestic needs of Kourfa and the neighbouring villages. The Association of Women of Niger obtained a grant from the American Development Foundation to finance the drilling of another well, and to provide equipment for market gardening and small-scale farming.

With the help of an agricultural adviser, the women have laid out a small market garden around the well. One hundred and forty of them have plots there in which they grow vegetables to feed their families. A small part of the harvest is dried for sale in the market at Abala, providing the women with the wherewithal to procure other goods, including the cereals they lack since Kourfa no longer receives sufficient rainfall to permit the cultivation of millet.

Men returning to the village have been surprised to find that life has become possible there again thanks to the courage of the women. Some are tempted to stay and take up vegetable-growing themselves, but there are not enough allotments to go round, and too little water. So Kourfa's women are now calling for a second well, an extension of the market garden, agricultural materials and seed. They are willing to pay the necessary price "so the men won't go away again".

In the last twenty years, the social and economic problems associated with the desertification of the Sahel have generally grown worse. Hundreds of villages in the area are now in danger of disappearing. Let us hope that the decisions taken at this year's Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro will bring the people of these steadily deteriorating areas some improvement in their living conditions. ■

JOSÉPHINE OUEDRAOGO, of Burkina Faso, is a sociologist and former government minister. She is currently working at the Panafrican Development Institute at Douala (Cameroon), where she is the co-ordinator of a project on Women and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Who is really speaking in the environment debate?

by Peggy Antrobus and Nan Peacocke

'The real dialogue is about the model of development and about values'

A famous painting by Pieter Brueghel, entitled *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,* depicts a beautiful harbour with houses rising from the waterfront. The reason for its title is not immediately apparent, and the viewer has to look very carefully to find the subject of the painting, the two legs of Icarus protruding from the surface of the water.

The picture can be taken to symbolize what is happening in the environmental debate. The story being told "on stage" does not represent what is happening "off stage" where real life is being lived. On stage the North often claims that it is trying to protect the environment, while the South, bent on development, is destroying it. But these are simplified characters. Off stage something else is happening. In order to understand the real story we have to leave the stage.

"The North" destroyed much of its own environment and that of the South as part of the colonial project. As the ecological consequences of this became apparent, Northern environmental groups began to challenge the practices of unrestrained industrialization and the nuclear

Women gather in Nairobi (Kenya) in 1985 for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985).

age. The membership of these groups was diverse, ranging from grassroots movements concerned about health and land rights to members of the scientific community and "nature-lovers". However, "environmentalism" only emerged in a leading role on stage when financial interests saw an opportunity to capitalize on this situation by offering technological solutions to the environmental crisis.

"South" is also a complex character. Southern governments have a legitimate concern about creating a better life for their people. However, this project, Development, becomes corrupted by the alliance between certain Northern financial-technological interests and certain Southern interest groups. "Developmentalism" emerges as a kind of industry, absorbing the time and talent of millions of people in its management and shaping the lives of hundred of millions more.

Hidden persuaders

If the characters of North and South are impersonators, who is really speaking? We have already identified the financial interests concealed beneath the cloaks of North and South. Their interest is in capital accumulation promoted through international trade. Unless these interests are clearly identified the dialogue is meaningless. Some of these interests are involved in exploiting the natural resource base of the South with technologies which destroy the environment. Others are selling "environmentally-friendly" technologies chiefly to Northern industries which can afford them.

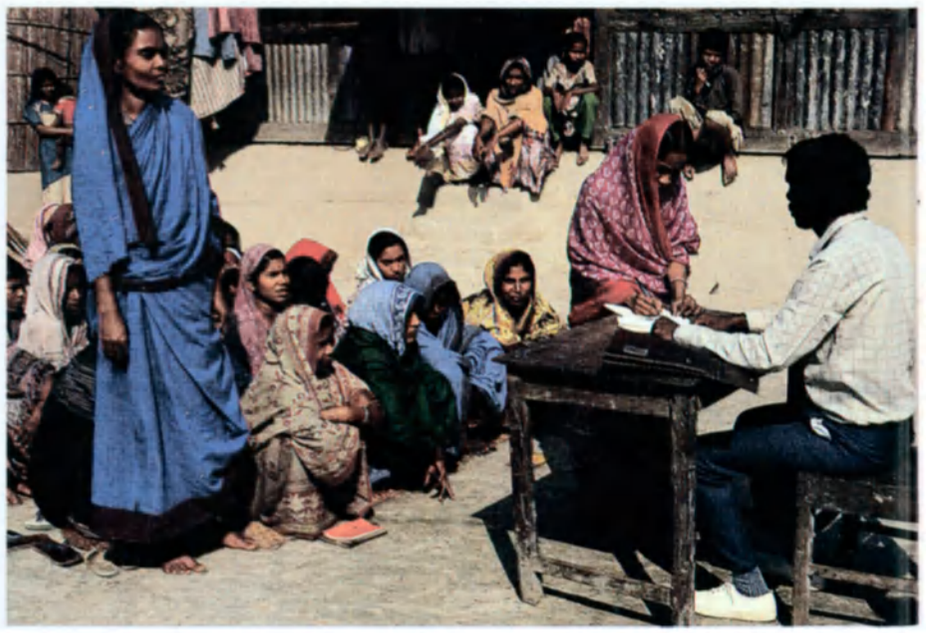
One implication of this is that the terms "North" and "South" are not useful. On the one hand they mask the pervasiveness of Northern financial-technological interests in South economies. On the other they conceal the common interests of grassroots movements in both North and South built around issues of health and environment, and worst of all they set up a false dichotomy between North and South.

The position of the North is ostensibly about "protecting the environment", that of the South is about "promoting development", but there are strong voices in the South which seek to protect their environments from the negative consequences of a development model which is exploitative of both natural and human environments, just as there are voices in the North challenging the excesses of the same development model on their health and livelihoods.

Indeed, as experience in the South shows, there is no necessary conflict between human livelihoods and environmental security. The conflict between these two is another consequence of the colonial project. Colonial expansion led to the large-scale appropriation of the most valuable land for the benefit of Northern industrial

interests. Millions of people—perhaps the majority of the Earth's population—are still being displaced and driven to struggle for subsistence on shrinking economic margins—whether in the deserts of Africa, on eroded hillsides in the Caribbean, in refugee camps in the Middle East, or in the urban slums of Asia and Latin America. The same process of marginalization is evident in the ghettos of the United States and the polluted cities of Eastern Europe.

The actions that are threatening to annihilate humankind and the planet are rooted in the conflict between industrial society and nature—a conflict in which the imperatives of industrial society



Bangladesh's Grameen Bank provides small sums of credit to the rural poor, and particularly to women (below left) who make up over 90% of its clients. A loan from the bank enabled 26-year-old Feroja (below, right), to open a drinks stall which she has now expanded into a small grocery. Borrowers contribute to a fund which helps to provide education for needy children, above.

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NAN PEACOCKE,
also from Barbados, is a publications editor with the WAND unit. She writes on cultural and environmental issues in the Caribbean.

dominate both the human and natural environments. The environmental crisis is the consequence of an inequitable world system between countries and within countries. The real dialogue is therefore about the model of development and about values. This model of development leads to overconsumption in the North and among a small group of people in the South and, on the other side of this coin, underconsumption among the majority of people in the South and a minority in the North.

Women in search of development alternatives

Third World women are in the forefront of the challenge to this model, and there are an increasing number of women in the North who share this perspective. Women, as key decision-makers in consumption, are also well placed to play a special role in changing consumption patterns. Two projects illustrate what can and is being done: the Women & Development Unit (WAND) of the School of Continuing Studies of the University of the West Indies (a regional project) and the network of Third World feminists advocating Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era, DAWN (an international project).

WAND, which was established in 1978, is an initiative of Caribbean women determined to ensure that the regional university would play a more active role in advancing programmes within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Women. Over the years, as a result of its analysis of the destructive impact on women of structural adjustment policies imposed from outside, its programmes of training, technical assistance, communications and networking have shifted from a focus on "integrating women in development" to "empowering women for social change".

The recognition of the need to make this conceptual shift was facilitated by the involvement of women from the Caribbean in discussions at the international level. A meeting of Third World women researchers, activists and policy-makers in Bangalore, India, in August 1984 assessed what had been learned from our experience over this period. As we talked, the theme "crisis" emerged as the common motif linking African food security, Latin American and Caribbean debt, Middle Eastern fundamentalism and nuclear testing in the Pacific. Our analysis showed that these apparently separate crises were related through the growth-oriented economic model which dominated our countries, and the need for women to organize to change the structures which keep them marginalized. The group produced a document for the End-of-Decade Conference in Nairobi and formed the DAWN network.

DAWN's perspective on the environment

DAWN's analysis has the following characteristics: it is holistic; it is feminist; it builds on a synthesis of regional diversity which places, for example, the consequences of tourism in one part of the world and desertification in another in a context which relates them to their common structural origins, thus linking the experience of women at the level of their daily lives (the micro level) to economic trends and their global environmental impacts (the macro level); and it is political—it makes a critique of political systems that ignore women's unpaid work at the level of social and economic planning.

In relation to the environment, DAWN's initial analysis traced the links between the food-fuel-water crises through neglect of poor Third World women's position as food producers, providers and managers. Neglect of women's work, the vital link in this chain, has been detrimental not only to women's interests but to the ecological systems which sustain their livelihoods.

DAWN's current analysis focuses on the themes of Environment, Reproductive Rights and Population, and Alternative Economic Frameworks. The common conceptual framework for the analysis will be that of livelihoods: recognizing the relationship between environmental degradation, population pressures and economic frameworks.

Country-dwellers are flocking to Mexico City at the rate of a thousand a day, swelling the population of districts like the Borde de Vias, above.

What does the ecological crisis mean for women in the 'South'?

The ecological crisis is the other side of the coin of the macroeconomic model. Since the end of World War II efforts to organize a global mode of production have been steadily gaining ground. This mode of production has two consequences: on the human environment (increasing disparities between social groups and countries); and on the natural environment (ecological degradation).

For a poor woman the global economic and ecological crises are experienced together, and they are experienced most immediately at the place where her survival is affected. A woman whose child is starving cannot be expected to ponder the aesthetic value of a tree. Where the ecological destruction brought on by the model of economic growth deprives her of land, the source of her livelihood is destroyed.

Meanwhile, disenfranchised women in the "South" are actually being *blamed* for many environmental problems. One of the limitations of the current debate is the failure to distinguish between macroeconomic systems and micro-level realities. Global phenomena such as depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, and pollution are overwhelmingly the result of the widespread sale and use of Northern technologies. However, the discussion tends to ignore macroeconomic factors and tends, perniciously, to focus instead on problems associated with poverty and population, which are more immediately observable.

Perspectives on "the environment" are informed by people's realities. There are many. From a "South" point of view, a tendency within the "North" to separate the natural from the human environments obscures some of the common structural origins of the threat to *all* life.

Similarly, the line drawn between an abstract "nature" (benign, vulnerable, endangered) and human beings (exploitative, and viewed by some as nature's enemy) is a dangerous line. From where we stand, the issue can be described in more political terms: currently, the imbalance between man-made productive systems and natural systems is jeopardizing the productive base, that is, jeopardizing both the natural environment and the productive capacity of human beings. When you look at the environment issue from the perspective of poor women what you see are issues of health and livelihoods.

Take any one of the key environmental issues and follow it through its various permutations and it will be clear that women are linked to economic policy and the international economy because of their sectoral activities and social roles. All of this points to the need for a framework which allows for policy shifts that will address each of the linking factors. ■

The Wheel of Life, a Buddhist symbol from the temple of Likir (Ladakh).

UNESCO IN ACTION

Rebuilding Beirut

UNESCO is to help Beirut rebuild its commercial district, assisting with such matters as documentation research, archaeological research and field surveys. It will also take part in the rehabilitation of historic sites and the National Museum, and in the development of a multi-purpose theatre, a cultural centre and the National Library. In accordance with an agreement made in October 1991, UNESCO and the Lebanese Council for Development and Reconstruction, the government agency with responsibility for rebuilding Beirut, will together seek the funds necessary for these operations.

New UNESCO publications

• UNESCO's Young Child and the Family Environment Project (YCF) has published a book on early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes in 88 countries. Entitled *Early Childhood Care and Education—A World Survey,* the 130-page book is based on responses to a questionnaire sent to all UNESCO Member States. The survey shows three growing trends in the provision of ECCE: parent/community participation, the expanded role of day-care centres and the role of the extended family. The book is available free of charge and can be obtained by writing to Wolfgang Schwendler, director of YCF, at UNESCO.

• *Education for AIDS Prevention* is a bibliography of worldwide documentation on information and education for the prevention of AIDS. Compiled using information from a computerized data bank, the bibliography includes indexed references of over 1,000 documents collected by the AIDS School Education Resource Centre (ASERC), a centre for the collection, analysis and dissemination of educational materials on AIDS prevention which is based at UNESCO headquarters. The 218-page bibliography, which is published in English, French and Spanish, is aimed at educators, social workers and others who are "facing problems of didactics and pedagogical methods with respect to the prevention of AIDS." It is available free of charge.

• The latest (1991) edition of UNESCO's indispensable *Statistical Yearbook* contains in table form information on education, educational expenditure, science and technology, libraries, book production, newspapers and other periodicals, cultural paper, film and cinema, radio and television broadcasting, international trade in printed matter. The *Yearbook* is published in a trilingual (English, French, Spanish) edition and costs 375 French francs.

Help for Bangladesh

UNESCO has approved a $50,000 grant to help cyclone-prone Bangladesh to introduce a disaster-preparation programme in its primary schools. The grant has been made in response to an appeal for international aid following the devastating cyclone which hit the country in April 1991, killing more than 140,000 people and causing damage to educational buildings, material and equipment estimated at almost $900 million. It will also be used to help train technicians to manage work on the construction of cyclone-resistant school buildings which can serve as places of refuge during natural disasters.

How Mexico's Indians saw the conquistadors

L'Amérique de la conquête peinte par les Indiens du Mexique, by Serge Gruzinski, has been published in the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works in collaboration with Editions Flammarion of Paris to mark the 500th anniversary of the encounter between two worlds in 1492. The author, assistant director of the Research Centre on Mexico, Central America and the Andes at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales-CNRS in Paris, has used remarkable images taken from many Indian codices to show how the Indians of Mexico saw the conquistadors and the upheavals experienced by their civilization. The images, most of which are published for the first time, shed light on a poignant episode in the history of humanity and a unique example of the interpenetration of civilizations.

Al-Andalus

The timetable of meetings organized by the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) on al-Andalus and announced in our December 1991 issue "Al-Andalus: where three worlds met" (page 31) has been modified. The third meeting will be held at UNESCO headquarters in mid-March 1992. Other meetings will be held at the Euro-Arab university in Toledo (Spain) from 13 to 20 June 1992 and in Malta from 25 to 27 June 1992.

Women and museums

How are women and womanhood presented and interpreted in museums? What is the status of women working in the museum professions and how can their career prospects be improved? These are some of the questions addressed in "Focus on Women", number 171 (1991) of *Museum,* UNESCO's international quarterly on museography. The cover shows four 15th-century French manuscript illuminations portraying women at work—writing, mining, painting and teaching.

Economics and ecology

The first international Salon-Forum of technologies and environment (ECOSITE), held in Paris from 7 to 9 January 1992, focused on the proposition that the protection of the environment could become a motor of growth. The president of ECOSITE, Danièle Rousseau, thinks that the combination of economics and ecology has a bright future, and that with the expanding market for eco-products and the growing search for environmentally sound procedures, the protection of the environment must now form part of the development strategies of successful companies. Two recent issues of the *UNESCO Courier* were presented at the Salon: "Environment and Development: a Global Commitment" (November 1991) and "The Demographic Dimension" (January 1992).

Twenty-three new sites included on World Heritage List

In December 1991 the following sites were added to the World Heritage List:

• The Benedictine Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch (Germany);
• Shark Bay, Western Australia (Australia);
• The historic city of Sucre (Bolivia);
• Serra da Capivara National Park (Brazil);
• Poblet Monastery (Spain);
• Old Rauma; the fortress of Suomenlinna (Finland);
• The banks of the Seine in Paris; Notre Dame cathedral, the Abbey of Saint Rémi and the Palais du Tau, Reims (France);
• Komodo National Park; Ujung Kulon National Park; Borobudur Temple compound; Prambanan Temple compound (Indonesia);
• The Historic Centre of Morelia (Mexico);
• Ilha de Moçambique (Mozambique);
• Air-Ténéré Reserve (Niger);
• Historic Centre of Lima (Peru);
• Danube Delta (Romania);
• Golden Temple of Dambulla (Sri Lanka);
• Royal Domain of Drottningholm (Sweden);
• Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary; Historic Town of Sukhothai and associated historic towns; Historic City of Ayutthaya and associated historic towns (Thailand).

Museums for tomorrow's Africa

Some forty African countries were representated at a series of meetings on tomorrow's African museums held in November 1991 in Benin, Ghana and Togo under the auspices of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), an exceptional event that aroused great interest among museum professionals, politicians and economic decision-makers wishing to develop African museology. Several international organizations, including UNESCO, were associated with the meetings, from which four priority themes emerged: the administrative and financial autonomy of African museums; closer collaboration between existing museographic structures; a new direction for training programmes; and increased contact between museums and society. Museums were defined as instruments of public education, cultural pluralism, national development and democracy.

UNESCO IN ACTION
WORLD HERITAGE

S.O.S. Dubrovnik

by Jean d'Ormesson

GLEAMING in the sunlight, looking out imperiously from its rock to the island-studded Adriatic, enclosed by on all sides by ramparts, Dubrovnik is perhaps the most fascinating and certainly one of the most beautiful cities in the world. If there is any place on Earth where culture, light, a beautiful setting and all the riches of art and history are concentrated in a small space, it is in Dubrovnik, which has been included by UNESCO on its World Heritage List along with other remarkable monuments and sites from every region and culture.

Look at a photograph, preferably one taken from the air, or even better study a model of the Old City of Dubrovnik. What is immediately striking is the homogeneity, unity and harmony of the site. Surrounded by ramparts that have survived intact, flanked by a tiny old port protected by bastions, Dubrovnik appears as a tightly-woven fabric of houses of light-coloured stone, dominated here and there by towers, palaces, churches and cloisters.

Art in Dubrovnik is closely linked to nature, and both are linked to freedom. Nature means first and foremost the sea: the Mediterranean, or to be more precise the Adriatic. Across it lie the Italian towns of Bari, Brindisi (where Virgil died), Ancona, and Ravenna, with its mosaics and its churches built by Justinian, Emperor of Constantinople, and by Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths. Above all there is Venice, Dubrovnik's model and rival.

On the Dubrovnik side, the Adriatic is a string of islands with enchanting names—Lokrum, Mljet, Korkula, Hvar—each one more verdant, more beautiful and more mysterious than the next. To the south lies Montenegro and the breathtakingly beautiful Gulf of Kotor, formerly the Gulf of Cattaro, where the mountains plunge sheer into the sea. For mountains are as omnipresent here as the sea. High hills, many of them covered in forest, dominate the port of Dubrovnik on every side. Nowhere has nature, under a pure-blue sky and a generous Sun, provided art with a more precious setting.

But it is to people and their genius that the city owes the greater part of its grandeur and its beauty. Art, beauty, freedom and talent made their appearance here very early, the result, as so often, of the shock from the

Opposite page, the old city of Dubrovnik, which was struck by shellfire on 6 December 1991 (above).

meeting of two cultures. Early in the seventh century, Slav tribes took control of an ancient colony of the Greek city of Epidaurus on the Dalmatian coast, attached in Roman times to the province of Illyricum. The colony's Greco-Roman inhabitants sought shelter a little further to the north, on a small island called Ragusium or Ragusa. On the mainland opposite, a Slav tribe settled in the midst of oak groves—*Dubrava.*

Centuries later, the narrow arm of the sea separating the Greek and Latin city from the Slav settlement was filled in, and over it was built the fine straight boulevard known as the Placa, or Stradun, which you can make out on any photograph of Dubrovnik to this day, crossing the town from one side to the other and bordered by churches and palaces. The destinies of Ragusa and Dubrovnik had become one.

The pupil and rival of Venice

The Placa is the centre of a city that was devoted for centuries to maritime trade and to art, and has managed despite the cold winds of history to preserve both its unique character and its independence. Established on the border between the former Western and Eastern Empires, Dubrovnik gradually filled with palaces and monuments which seem to follow a rigorously ordered plan. Venice, which took over suzerainty of Dubrovnik from Constantinople in 1204, was to exercise a considerable influence on it. In fact Dubrovnik, long considered the "Athens of the Southern Slavs" for its humanists, philosophers, poets, mathematicians and artists, was both a bold and brilliant pupil of Venice and also its rival.

The Clock Tower rises at the other end of the Placa. It forms the centrepiece of the square that groups Dubrovnik's masterpieces, foremost among them the Sponza Palace, whose façade is decorated with a gallery supported by pillars forming half a dozen supremely elegant arches. The baroque Church of St. Blaise faces the palace. In front of it stands the column of Roland, erected in 1418—legend has it that the nephew of Charlemagne landed at Ragusa with a Frankish fleet despatched by the emperor to fight the Saracens.

Perhaps the most beautiful of all Dubrovnik's monuments is the Rector's Palace, just a stone's throw away. First built in the twelfth century, then damaged by a violent earthquake that destroyed much of the town, it was rebuilt as a dwelling for the city's Rector. A new office-holder was elected to the post each month. The incumbent was not allowed to leave the building in the course of his term of duty. Hence the Latin inscription on its façade: *Obliti privatorum publica curate* ("Forget your private affairs and look after the public good").

Situated on the edge of the Ottoman Empire, just as Venice, until the start of the thirteenth century, had been located on that of the Byzantine Empire, Dubrovnik accumulated masterpieces as the centuries passed by: rare and precious objects, rich fabrics, vases, sculptures, paintings by Titian and Raphael, Tintoretto and Tiepolo. Technical and social progress combined with the cult of art and tradition. As early as 1347, Ragusa had a hospice for old people. Torture was abolished in 1416. So was the slave trade (which has left an echo in Venice in the Riva degli Schiavoni, which runs along the lagoon from the Piazzetta to the environs of the Arsenal). Public education attained a high level early on.

In the midst of the triumph of humanism and the cult of progress, tradition remained strong. In the Church of the Franciscans, there

UNESCO IN ACTION
WORLD HERITAGE

Built over the channel that once separated the Greco-Roman island of Ragusium from the Slav coastal settlement of Dubrava, the street known as the Placa cuts through the heart of Dubrovnik's old city. The bell-tower of the Franciscan Church rises in the background.

is a fifteenth-century painting of St. Blaise, patron saint of the city. In his hand he holds a model of Dubrovnik. And in spite of the centuries that have passed, the wars, the fires and the earthquakes, the city still looks very much today as it did then, half a millennium ago.

Fear stalks the streets

Yet Dubrovnik has undergone many trials, few of them crueller than that it endures today. The town has been under siege for several months. Water is in short supply. Provisions only arrive in small quantities via the new port, some kilometres away from the Old City. Shells have fallen throughout the city, starting fires in the outer suburbs and causing damage in the Old City. Fear stalks the streets of Venice's rival.

Many other peoples throughout the world, who cannot boast Dalmatia's history or art treasures, doubtless suffer as much or worse. And the life of men, women and children is as precious in one place as in another. Yet history has endowed Dubrovnik with a special status. It is a small piece of the past that has survived into the present, a fragment of beauty that lightens the world. And people need beauty just as they need bread and love. Throughout its brilliant history, among all the ups and downs of fortune, Ragusa has not only embodied the highest artistic values, but has also defended its independence, served the cause of humanity and, within the limits of its physical and spiritual resources, been in the vanguard of progress and human rights.

UNESCO's task is very difficult in the trials being experienced by Dubrovnik today. It is impossible for an international organization in which Yugoslavia has long played an important role to take sides in a fratricidal war. But for all those who believe in the fundamental principles of UNESCO, it is equally unthinkable to remain inactive or indifferent to the risk of seeing a cultural treasure destroyed. All people of goodwill must mobilize to save Dubrovnik. More, they must work to bring the war to an end and to help reconcile adversaries who may be separated by their passions but whom history and geography constrain to live together. ■

JEAN D'ORMESSON, French writer, is Secretary General of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies and Editor of *Diogenes*, an international review of the human sciences published with the aid of UNESCO. A member of the French Academy since 1973, he is the author of many essays and novels, a number of which have been published in English, including *The Glory of the Empire* (New York, 1974) and *At God's Pleasure* (New York, 1977). He visited Dubrovnik while it was under siege in December 1991 on board the *Rance*, a French vessel engaged on a humanitarian mission.

UNESCO AND THE DUBROVNIK EMERGENCY

In addition to the Old City of Dubrovnik, eight other sites in Yugoslavia are included on UNESCO's World Heritage List: Stari Ras and the monastery of Sopocani; the historic centre of Split, with the Palace of Diocletian; Plitvice Lakes National Park; the regions of Ohrid and Kotor; Durmitor National Park; Studenica monastery; and the Skocjan caves. These sites are covered by two international conventions, both ratified by Yugoslavia: the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).

Since September 1991, Mr. Federico Mayor, the Director-General of UNESCO, has made repeated and urgent appeals for the protection of Dubrovnik's historic Old City and of other World Heritage sites threatened by the fighting in Croatia. On 28 October, in response to the mounting danger, he sent a personal representative to Dubrovnik to remind the authorities concerned of their obligations under the two Conventions. He made a number of appeals for the parties involved to begin negotiations for a peaceful resolution of their differences. UNESCO's General Conference, meeting in Paris, called for the withdrawal of hostile forces from Dubrovnik, "whose splendour belongs to all humanity".

On 28 November, two UNESCO observers arrived in Dubrovnik, with instructions to record the damage done to the Old City and to keep the Director-General informed of the situation on a daily basis. Up to that time, the Old City had been largely spared by the fighting, but on 6 December the historic centre was severely damaged by heavy artillery fire.

The UNESCO observers examined the damage on site then, from their shelter, reported by telephone on the extent of the damage: some buildings were seriously damaged, others were on fire. Among the buildings affected were the Pile gate, the Dominican monastery, the Church of St. Blaise, the Sponza Palace, the Serbian church and the Rupe Museum. The Director-General expressed his "consternation and outrage", and solemnly demanded in the name of international law that all hostile action against the city should cease at a time when "the flags of the United Nations are flying over [its] historic quarters."

In December 1991, the World Heritage Committee representing 123 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, including Yugoslavia, felt compelled, "considering the emergency situation of the Old City of Dubrovnik . . . to inscribe it on the List of World Heritage in Danger in order to encourage special measures to be taken for its preservation."

A new observer mission was sent to the city on 17 January 1992 to draw up an inventory of the damage and to gather the information needed to draw up a plan for its restoration. ■

UNESCO is proposing to create a fund for the safeguard of Dubrovnik, with $200,000 being allocated for the most urgent tasks. It is also planning to launch an international fund-raising campaign for the restoration of cultural monuments damaged by the war in Yugoslavia.

BOOK REVIEW

JUST PUBLISHED

Lotfallah Soliman on a new critique of UNESCO—

L'UNESCO: 'Une entreprise erronée'?

by Chikh Bekri

Editions Publisud, Paris 1991

Space Flight **(above) is a sculpture symbolizing the scientific and cultural achievements that have made possible the exploration of the cosmos. Presented to UNESCO by the USSR, it spent 16 weeks in space on board the Soyuz 7 spacecraft in 1982.**

CHIKH Bekri's book *L'UNESCO: "Une entreprise erronée?"** is a heartfelt statement from a man who was a senior international civil servant for twenty-five years and between 1976 and 1987 occupied the posts of Assistant Director-General of UNESCO and head of its Director-General's Executive Office. Its purpose is to try to halt "the kind of creeping state intervention which will end by robbing the institution of its special identity".

Even for those who do not share Bekri's idealism, the book is essential reading. It is the work of a thoughtful and well informed author who at no point in its 300 pages allows himself to be carried away by the passion within him. He scrupulously charts the history of UNESCO, not in order to describe how it works or to make a list of what it has and has not done but to reveal the malformation, which he regards as "congenital", that has led it from "brilliance" to "inertia" and may eventually cause it to disappear or disintegrate into a group of "small, specialized, purely technical institutions, tightly controlled by those who hold the purse-strings".

The title of the book is borrowed from the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, though Bekri has carefully added a question-mark. This is a way of suggesting that UNESCO could conceivably not be "a mistaken enterprise" after all. But in what circumstances might this be so? To answer this question, the author first draws a genetic map of UNESCO with the aim of identifying its constituent parts and discovering the fundamental reasons for its functioning and malfunctioning.

UNESCO, in his view, is an international organization with a difference. It is essentially an "ethical" or "moral" enterprise that must be served by "missionaries". Like the Jesuits who do nothing that is not "for the greater glory of God", UNESCO's staff must devote themselves totally to "the greater glory of the League of Intellects" (here he takes up an expression of Paul Valéry, who said in 1930 that "the League of Nations presupposes a League of Intellects").

Starting his enquiry from these Kantian perspectives, Bekri notes that politics have been an ever-present factor in UNESCO's history, not to mention its prehistory: "politics were written into the Organization's genes". The very affirmation of a desire to "contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture" is in itself a political act. To challenge such an objective is also political.

The divergences that appeared at the time of the conference held in November 1945 to establish UNESCO were not between politicians and others, but between "those who wished for the creation of an organism of technical intellectual co-operation in which eminent scholars and great thinkers of incontestable moral and spiritual authority would predominate (as they had at the time of the League of Nations in the International Commission for Intellectual Co-operation) and those who wanted an intergovernmental organization that would be political in its nature, ethical in its objectives and technical in its fields of action, in which decisions would

be taken exclusively by those who have the power, the responsibility and the means to carry them out".

So there never was any question of creating a kind of gigantic non-governmental organization. In UNESCO the political powers-that-be controlled from the outset not merely the material but also the legal means of international co-operation. UNESCO's great achievements in Italy, Egypt or Indonesia would, for example, certainly have been impossible without the authorization, not to mention the participation, of the governments concerned.

Chikh Bekri has too much experience of international co-operation to be put out of his stride by this. However, a reading of his book makes it possible to see where his own preferences lie. If governments must be involved, it is in order to provide the "missionaries" with the means to carry out their programmes, not to make them subject to their political interests.

For Chikh Bekri, UNESCO's founders put the fat in the fire when they failed to clarify "the ambiguous relationship between political power and the intellectual community". That, in his view, is UNESCO's "original sin". From that point onwards, political interference steadily increased at the cost of the "League of Intellects". This has not been without "disastrous consequences", since such interference not only threatens to end up by failing to manage UNESCO but by itself becoming unmanageable.

The author's attitude to UNESCO is at once understanding and critical. He recognizes that UNESCO cannot be the "League of Intellects" that he would like to see, yet it is in the name of such a League that he makes his principal criticisms of it. He develops his argument from an uncomfortable position, both "inside" and "outside". He looks for inspiration to the tripolar model of the International Labour Organisation, which, he feels, rests on a viable compromise. "A greater role (in national delegations and the executive board) for intellectuals organized as such through their associations and unions . . . would reduce the influence of the politicians and would allow educators, scientists and men of culture to make their voices heard".

This proposal raises a problem. It would be attractive if it were possible to define precisely what the term "intellectual" means, but this reviewer for one is obliged to confess that he has long since given up trying to do that. There is no such thing as a professional intellectual. Teachers, engineers, doctors, journalists, even writers, are none of them necessarily intellectuals. Look in the encyclopaedias and you will find no-one listed there as an "intellectual"—not Diderot, not Hegel, not Marx, not Sartre, not Bertrand Russell. Edgar Morin is referred to as an anthropologist and sociologist. He becomes an "intellectual" when, as an offshoot from his academic work, he makes a stand on a given issue and takes risks.

The intellectual, then, is a phenomenon that has no existence as such but can only exist *conjuncturally*. Outside a given situation in which they become involved, ask questions and explode myths, intellectuals are journalists, writers, engineers, doctors, physicists, lawyers, civil servants or whatever.

So there can be no association of intellectuals "as such". Any association of this kind is instrumentralized right from the word go. And when pseudo-intellectuals gather in such pseudo-associations, it is usually for reasons that have nothing to do with the life of the intellect.

Nowhere, either in the initial proposal made to the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education, in the French project, or in the final documents that were approved by the Conference at which UNESCO was established (all published by the author as appendices to the main text), does the word "intellectual" appear as a noun. The expression "intellectual co-operation" only appears (and there with great frequency) in the French project, and seems to have been used (albeit sparingly) in the final document simply to satisfy the French delegation.

Chikh Bekri is aware of this, and at one point uses the expression "intellectual workers" instead of "intellectuals". But then the whole concept of the "League of Intellects" is cast into doubt, for the civil service (to cite only one example) is full of "intellectual workers", so called only to distinguish them from "manual workers"—a distinction which, moreover, is becoming increasingly vague.

The idea of a "League of Intellects" is an honourable one. Chikh Bekri wants to remind us that the species is not extinct. He should be heeded as a wise man for whom ethics, morality and devotion to a just cause are inestimable values. ■

LOTFALLAH SOLIMAN, Egyptian writer and journalist, is the author of a history of Palestine, *Pour une histoire profane de la Palestine* (La Découverte publishers, Paris, 1989).

The music

On the stage of an open-air theatre in Rangoon, a gorgeously-costumed woman performs an introductory *Nat* dance in front of the drums and gongs of an orchestral ensemble, the *hsaing-waing*.

# of Myanmar

by Khin Mya Kyu

THE music of Burma—now officially known as the Union of Myanmar—is close in spirit to those of the Southeast Asian civilizations of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. The Indian influence is less perceptible here than in the nation's mythology and religious beliefs, or than in such other arts as the shadow-theatre and dance-drama.

The most complete Burmese instrumental ensemble is the *hsaing-waing,* which consists basically of a set of from eight to twenty-one drums suspended by leather thongs on a circular rattan frame, and of a circular array of gongs. In addition there may be anything from seven to twelve other instruments, among them oboes, bamboo clap-sticks, hand-cymbals, flutes and mouth organs, bells, xylophones and zithers. As in all the countries of the region, however, drums and gongs predominate. In traditional orchestras, they come in many shapes and forms: double-headed drums struck with wooden sticks, double-headed horizontal drums played by hand, single-headed pottery drums. The gongs may be flat or bulbous, suspended or supported on wooden frames. Most of these instruments, including the drums, produce an unvarying sound. For that reason, they normally come in pairs, one for sharp tones and the other for flat.

Burmese musical practice, in which the notes are identified in descending order, resembles that of other Southeast Asian countries: the octave is divided, theoretically, into seven equal intervals. Whatever mode is used to play a melody, the structure of the scale remains the same.

Improvization plays an important part in traditional Burmese music. Whereas in most parts of the world the instruments of the orchestra are meant to be played in unison, in the traditional Burmese orchestra, instrumentalists start from a common melody but are free to play whatever variations they like, provided they join up with the ensemble from time to time. Sometimes the results could be called "heterophonic", but they do not lack harmony for all that.

In Myanmar, as in the rest of Asia, music is closely linked to the performing arts, notably plays, puppet-shows, shadow theatre, dance-drama and opera. In drama, the Indian influence is preponderant. All the characters, whether heroes or gods, originate in the Ramayana or Mahabharata epics, or in the Jataka, narratives relating episodes from the Buddha's previous incarnations. Performances, which often take place in the open air, may last for several hours, sometimes even for days.

Ancient instruments, modern rhythms

Burmese music has not escaped the contagion of Western pop, which is widely broadcast by the media. Some musicians have tried to create a synthesis by adapting Burmese lyrics to Western rhythms or by performing translated French and English songs to a Burmese backing. This so-called "new music" is a hybrid genre whose artistic value is at best uncertain. But it is popular with the young, and the influence of radio, television and cinema will eventually establish its grip.

Yet Myanmar remains the land of 100,000 pagodas, for each village has at least one monastery and a pagoda. The chimes of bells and metal gongs, carried on the wind, are relayed from community to community in an uninterrupted chain. This music at least will long remain an irreplaceable feature of the Burmese landscape. ■

KHIN MYA KYU, formerly head of the French Department at the Institute of Foreign Languages in Rangoon, is currently a staff member in UNESCO's Office of Public Information. She has published several works on the art and culture of her country, including *Shingyan ou Fêtes de l'eau en Birmanie* (1990), and has collaborated on a French-Burmese dictionary that currently runs to 14 volumes.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

When the cup overflows

If Gabriel García Márquez (in the interview published in your October 1991 issue entitled "Children in danger") considers that he is the result of a European "overflow", that is his business. But it seems to me not only unjust but historically inaccurate to extend that remark to all of Latin America.

Does he not know that Europe, and more especially Spain, sent over gentlemen (if that title means anything to him) who were gallant, enterprising, hard-working and honest in every respect? And let's not forget that we Latin Americans also trace our lineage, in varying degrees, to the indigenous peoples, who were subjugated to a greater or lesser extent, and to the infamously-treated Africans.

What's more, García Márquez goes on to declare that Europe has lost sight of the vicissitudes of its own history (and dare one add that Europe itself was born of an "overflow" of the Roman Empire or of the barbarian invaders of the fifth century?), that Tenochtitlán in the fifteenth century was larger than Paris, and that the African influence is particularly marked in some Latin-American countries. . . . So what does this European "overflow" in Latin America really amount to?

Gustavo Restrepo Uribe
Quito (Ecuador)

Al-Andalus in 13th-century Marseilles

Pottery, often considered a minor art, has recently afforded us archaeologists with a remarkable illustration of the cultural exchanges between Andalusian Spain and Provence. Convincing evidence of a transfer of technology to Marseilles early in the thirteenth century has been provided by the discovery of a pottery workshop unearthed during a rescue excavation undertaken in co-operation with the city's Cultural Heritage Workshop.

Building work in the Sainte Barbe district revealed the presence of a medieval suburb outside the city's ancient walls occupied by potters who shared the same cultural background and specialized in enamelwork and glazing using the lead ore known as alquifou. Large deposits of pottery were found around their kilns (one of which employed Arab technology), and the variety of the work left little doubt of the potters' links with the Muslim world.

The opulence of the candle-holders, plates, dishes, cups, vases of the types known as *ataifor, redoma* and *limeta,* and *alcadafe* basins found there has no equivalent in contemporary Provençal work, which shows no sign of techniques that had been used since the tenth century in Murcia, Granada, Malaga and in the Sicily-North Africa region. Stills, filtration-vessels, jugs with spouts in the form of animals, painted cups and paving-tiles indicate the versatility of the workshop, the oldest pottery yet discovered north of the Pyrenees. Its work was continued in the fourteenth century in the Avignon region, when the papal court moved there.

Archaeology has thus revealed an unexpected staging-post in the transmission of a form of specialized technical knowledge which influenced later ceramic production.

H. Marchesi, J. Thiriot, L. Vallauri
Laboratory of Medieval Mediterranean Archaeology, ERA 6-CNRS,
Aix-en-Provence (France)

Environmentalists in the firing-line

It is a pity that so much ecological nonsense found its way into your November 1991 issue on Environment and Development.

Jacques-Yves Cousteau uses inaccurate statistics and makes wild statements, for example (and this is my favourite) that "we shall all end up panting to death if amounts of carbon dioxide continue to increase". In fact, if carbon dioxide poses a problem at all, it is certainly not a respiratory one. And, incidentally, two Danish meteorologists have recently shown that there is a close correlation between average air temperature in the northern hemisphere and the duration of sun-spot cycles, which suggests that the greenhouse effect may be far less significant than had previously been thought.

It was amusing to see Worldwatch Institute's representatives—Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin and Sandra Postel—making the case for solar energy as a panacea for all ills at the very time that a major constructor of solar-energy equipment was going bankrupt.

Bernard Gilland
Espergaerde (Denmark)

Utopias and socialism

Reading your February 1991 issue on utopias, I was struck by the similarities between ancient utopias and present-day socialism. Nevertheless, I do not share the view of Plato's work expressed by Gilles Lapouge in his excellect article "The Fiasco of Paradise". The Greek philosopher formulated two paradoxical ideas of the ideal state. If he denied the family in *The Republic,* he made a civic duty of it in *The Laws.*

G. Konovalova
Yekaterinburg (Russia)

Sardinian maps

I read your issue on maps and map-makers (June 1991) with great interest, particularly the articles concerning the production of the first maps in France. In this connection, I should like to point out that Savoy's first cadastral map was produced in 1730 in Piedmont on the initiative of Victor Amadeus II. (Savoy was not then part of France.) Called "Sardinian maps" from the joint kingdom of Sardinia and Piedmont of which Victor-Amadeus was the first ruler, the plans were still being consulted in the Savoyard town of Ugine in 1945. They are beautifully executed in colour, with contours, trees and marshland all depicted according to a precise system of codification.

G. Dalas
Chambéry (France)

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Theme of the next issue (April 1992):

ART IN THE STREET

Also featuring:
an interview with American writer
William Styron

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