

account P.). Women's reluctance to put their names to occurrences of sexual abuse makes it difficult to record even the incidents reported at the workshop.

CONCLUSION

Women experience the war in a variety of exhausting and traumatic ways. They are not necessarily less committed than men but they have little influence in decision making about whether or how or where fighting should occur. Women's tasks in the war are largely extensions of their traditional roles. They are performing the same essential support tasks of emotional and sexual servicing, household and family management that they always have. Because of their efforts to maintain family life they are confronted by their losses in an intimate way.

Men are mobile; they can and do move around and leave the war zone at different times. Women are constrained by their domestic obligations and their children. Women bear the brunt of the burden in that they are ultimately responsible for the provision of food and shelter and comfort.

The workshop was left with questions about the way women experience the war and the roles they play. We asked: Do women have a choice in the roles they perform? How would women challenge their gender roles under these circumstances? And lastly: Do women want to change these roles?

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The ANC women's league returns

Ela Ramgobin

Natal Organisation of Women

The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the coming return of the exiles has posed many difficult and exciting questions for internal political organisations. The most important is 'how are internal organisations going to relate to the ANC structures?'

In May about 70 women from women's organisations inside South Africa and from the ANC Women's League met in Lusaka. The Conference was held to discuss the disbanding of current organisations and the possibility of their joining the ANC Women's League.

The Conference had ambitious objectives

- to re-examine our tactics
- to assess our strengths and weaknesses
- to examine our organisational structures and modes of operation both inside the country and outside in order
- to determine the level and efficacy of women's organisational structures and

- to understand the status and level of preparedness of women towards liberation
- to draw up a tentative constitution for the ANC Women's League
- to draw up a programme of action for the liberation and emancipation of women.

Inputs from the delegates set the scene for the discussion. First stalwarts of the Women's League provided a historical background to the formation of the League and its activities. Gertrude Shope gave an overview of the endeavours of women in the external ANC and Albertina Sisulu spoke on the activities of the internal wing. They also gave information on other areas of concern to women and issues regarding our liberation. Women from inside the country talked critically about the strengths and weaknesses of their organisations.

The discussion then moved on to the nub of the matter - should women's organisations inside the country disband and their members join the ANC Women's

League? Is there a need for a separate, autonomous women's organisation or should it continue to operate within the ANC?

In the ensuing discussion reasons were given in support of joining the League. The primary need is to mobilise women in order to

1. draw them in to support the ANC, and
2. ensure that women's issues are incorporated in all aspects of the Organisation's activities.

The suggestions in support of the first need showed that there is a need to recruit women into the Organisation and to provide a structure which will form a basis for maximum unity among women nationally.

In advocating the need to join the League in order to ensure the rightful place of women's issues within the Organisation, the following points were raised:

- There is a need to ensure that the Organisation as a whole concerns itself with the emancipation of women, and transforms the liberation struggle to include the liberation of women.
- There is a need for the voice of women to be heard within the Organisation so that women are able to influence policy - not only in a narrow sphere of 'women's issues', but in all broader issues, including political and economic policy.

- It was proposed that the tasks of the League should include ensuring that the needs and interests of women are addressed. In addition affirmative action should be taken to assist the development of women in leadership roles and to ensure that action is taken against violations of the rights of women.

- It was also suggested that the League would be in a position to advocate that women's demands should be included in the constitution of the Organisation, and that in a new South Africa these demands should have legal force through their incorporation in the constitution.

The conference delegates agreed that the initial thrust of the Organisation would be to recruit members into the ANC.

Thereafter women would be recruited into the League. All women members of the ANC would be eligible for membership of the League and would apply to it. It was also accepted that an internal leadership core needed to be established.

During the discussion about the inclusion of women in all policy issues, women were urged to get involved in debates about the future economy. It was noted that economic policy affects women as primary workers and the most oppressed group. All political parties, from the extreme left to

the far right, have been discussing economic issues, theories and possibilities for South Africa and women should not get left behind. Racial domination is not only politically but also economically entrenched. Women need to be familiar with economic arguments. They should recognise that the concept of a mixed economy is meaningless unless exactly which aspects are favoured and which are not are spelled out.

The women at the conference also discussed questions around the land and knowledge of policy. The Freedom Charter asserts that the land shall be owned by those who work it, and that there shall be housing, security and comfort for all. In terms of current policy this would require major restructuring and changes to the legislation. Most women are located in the rural areas which are poorly resourced and without developed infrastructures. Changes such as the scrapping of the Group Areas Act will not make any difference to these women. In addition many women are hampered by a lack of knowledge of the law and are illiterate. This implies that they may be left out of important decision making processes and will not be able to claim their rights. It is important that women find ways of participating in debates so that they are able to raise their concerns and ensure their future security.

The delegates to the women's conference in Lusaka agreed that all demands for the rights of women should be sent to the Johannesburg office.

Coordination and collation will be done there. Meetings will be held regionally to decide who should collect demands and how this should be done. The current women's organisations will remain functioning until the Women's League is established internally.

The violence in Natal received attention from the Conference and a programme of action was drawn up. At the level of public action this included:

- A resolution condemning the violence to be sent to President de Klerk;
- A resolution to mount a national and international campaign for peace; this would include representation to all the embassies;
- A decision that all sectors should be mobilised; atrocities and violent acts should be publicised.

The conference saw the need for material aid and resolved that:

- The National Women's Executive Committee (NWECC) would meet with the Treasurer General's Office (TGO) of the ANC to set up a committee to receive financial aid;

- Medical assistance should be provided.

At the grassroots level children should be encouraged to write letters to Chief Buthelezi and President de Klerk about the violence.

ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The conference decided that a speaking tour and the campaign should be launched as soon as possible.

A workshop was held in Durban on May 26 which began to address local organisational issues.

And Still They Dance Stephanie Urdang

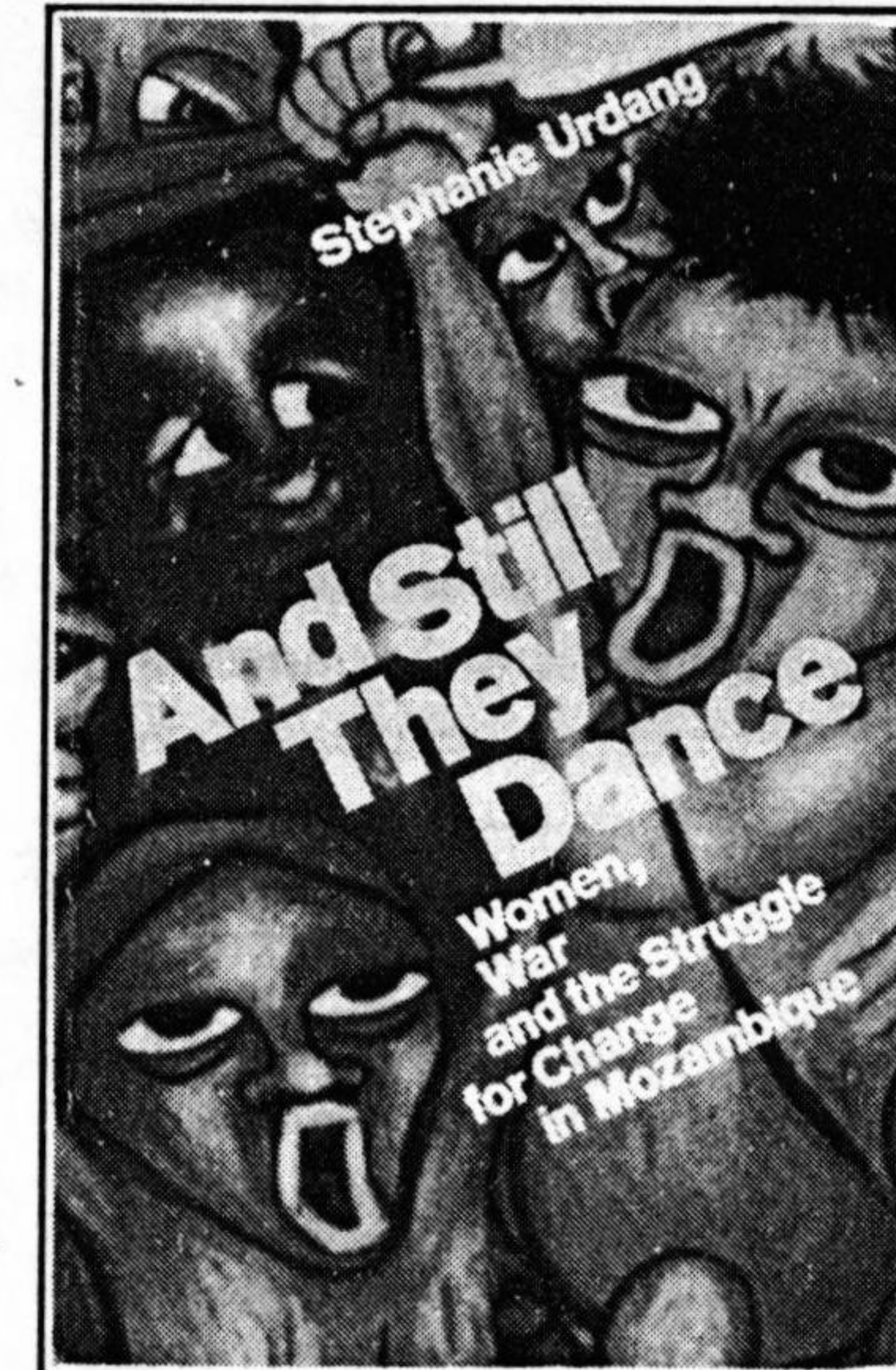
London : Earthscan Publications Limited, 1989

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This is a book that breaks your heart whilst making a very brave attempt at mending it. It tells of the story of the women of Mozambique, women who won their independence in 1975 and who are now being cheated of its fruits. It tells of their hopes, their tragedies, their calm resolve, their weariness and their energy. It is told, where possible, in their own words. Sensitively observed, Stephanie Urdang also captures their expressions and gestures, which tell a thousand tales.

"I have been doing interviews with women for many years, trying to piece together the stories of women's lives, in Guinea-Bissau, in Mozambique, in South Africa ... A journalist tries to look for clues, almost instinctively. The looks that dart across faces, the eyes that are lowered, the flush of cheeks, the tone of the voice."

This is also the story of Stephanie Urdang's own relationship with and admiration for Mozambique's revolution and Frelin's



commitment to women's emancipation as an integral part of its national liberation struggle. In the opening pages she quotes Eduardo Mondlane's prophetic remarks in 1969 that "our struggle is more than one nation. It is the beginning of the liberation of Southern Africa". She also repeats Samora Machel's well known dictum from the founding conference of the Organisation of Mozambican Women (OMM) in 1973 : "The liberation of women is the fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a precondition for victory." As a Southern African herself, she shared in the excitement and enthusiasm of