

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE 75¢

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN'S DAY

Stop the Execution of Theresa Ramashamola

by Sheryl Boswell and Linzi Manicom

Theresa Ramashamola is a symbol of the thousands of South African women who courageously face the brutality of a ruthlessly repressive regime. Theresa - the first woman in South Africa to receive the death sentence - is a symbol of the thousands of South African detainees, of political prisoners, of those in solitary confinement, and those who have been forced into hiding and exile to avoid detention and torture. Theresa is on deathrow waiting to be executed.

Theresa is a symbol of the brave South African women who are organizing and fighting on many different fronts to bring about an end to the sys-

tem of apartheid. Let's show our solidarity with the struggle of South African women by commemorating the thirty-first anniversary of South African Women's Day August 9th.

In December 1985, Theresa Ramashamola and five others were sentenced to death by hanging for their alleged involvement in the murder of Mr. Khuzwayo Dlamini. As an official in the puppet township government, Dlamini was complicit in the repression of his own people. He was killed at the onset of the uprising in the Vaal area townships, September 1984, a moment which heralded an escalation of massive popular opposition to the oppressive

conditions of apartheid.

This escalation of opposition to apartheid has resulted in 25,000 being arrested and over 11,000 being put in detention, never knowing when they will be released. More than 100 people are killed in South Africa every year. These statistics are an indictment of the oppressive conditions in South Africa, the degree of massive popular unrest and consequently, the suppression of this opposition by South African forces. The "State of Emergency" imposed in 1985 is still in effect today.

The trial of Theresa and the other "Sharpeville Six"

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Rebel Girls Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

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We are a socialist-feminist group which operates on the principle that mass action is our most effective instrument of change. We believe that the oppression of women touches every aspect of our lives and that the liberation of women will require fundamental changes in the structure of society.

We hold bi-weekly meetings where our policy and overall direction are determined. Smaller committees work on specific events or issues or in different constituencies.

We welcome new members. For more information phone Nancy at 531-6608.

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(Rexdale MicroSkills is an on-the-job training program for immigrant women in microfilm and automated office procedures. For further information phone Shelly Gordon 247-7181.)

This issue put together by:
Sheryl Boswell, Debi Brock, Carolyn Egan, Nancy Farmer, Sandy Fox, Mary Gellatly, Catherine Glenn, Shelly Gordon, Lynn Lathrop, Magda Taszycka, Mariana Valverde, Ellen Waxman, Cindy Wright.

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Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of International Women's Day Committee, but those of the author.

Editorial

The Letter Carriers of Canada are back at work but the larger issues surrounding their strike against the Post Office have not been settled.

These bigger issues are the same ones raised by Vander Zalm in his union-busting labour legislation in British Columbia, the Devine governments' massive cuts in social services spending in Saskatchewan, legislation sending public employees back to work in Newfoundland and the woodcutters protests in New Brunswick.

Mulroney's Conservatives, allied provincial governments and the big business sector are trying to reorganize and readjust the Canadian economy in a major way. We see this in the privatization of social services and pressure on services like nursing homes and the post office to make a profit. We see it in moves toward freer trade that will gut the garment industry, leaving thousands of immigrant workers unemployed with no chance of retraining. We see it in the use of police, legislation and scabs against strikers like the Gainers workers.

Despite Canada's economic "recovery" and soaring profits, unions are fighting for their very survival, forced out on strike simply to hold their ground. This "recovery" is not being shared by everyone.

Why is it important for socialist-feminists to support the Letter Carriers Union of Canada when there are no specifically "women's" issues on the bargaining table?

There are two main reasons.

Unions have traditionally led the way in making gains for all workers. Without contract gains by major unions like CUPW and LCUC we wouldn't have paid maternity leave, pay equity laws and any protection against sexual harassment. If union strength is eroded, the rights and protections of all working people will be lessened. By supporting unions on strike we support the people who will, with our insistence, fight for employment equity, against hospital closures and for fully accessible social services in the next round of bargaining.

Secondly, every inch gained by the neo-Conservatives economic plan threatens thousands of ordinary people. Free trade will hurt women and immigrants worst. The Meech Lake Constitutional accord could signal the end to national social service programs. In the name of freedom, employers will fight tooth and nail against employment equity because it may curtail profits.

By supporting the Letter Carriers in their strike against further privatization of postal services and the Post Office's attempts to make a profit at the workers' expense, we are fighting one of the battles in the war against an economy that will reward the few and discard the disadvantaged.

Letter Carriers Union of Canada

No Scab Mail Here

Please support your letter carrier

Letters

Dear Sisters & Brothers:

I am writing to you, in order to thank you for your help, support and solidarity during the recent strike of the South Central Postal Cleaners.

The International Women's Day Committee provided our Local with a lot of support, solidarity and assistance during our five (5) month struggle for "Justice for Postal Cleaners". Your assistance was an integral and essential part of the victory we were able to achieve on June 8, 1987.

It is this very type of support that workers in Canadian society require, in order to achieve justice against almost insurmountable obstacles placed in front of us by employers and various taints of right-wing, anti-worker governments.

The Postal Cleaners were not only fighting an immoral and socially perverted employer, but they were also taking on the Mulroney Government's policies of contracting-out unionized work to private companies who exploit immigrant workers for the sake of profit.

The South Central Postal Cleaners were able to overcome the obstacles placed before them and smash through the wall of poverty which is built upon the Conservative agenda of Contracting-Out and Privatization.

The International Women's Day Committee, along with other support groups, with their support and solidarity, helped strengthen the resolve and determination of the Postal Cleaners to fight-on towards victory.

Again, Sisters and Brothers, thank you for your support and solidarity.

In Solidarity,

Andre Kolompar,
1st Vice President,
CUPW Toronto Local.

c.c. J.C. Parrot, D. Tingley.

Video Challenged

AN OPEN LETTER TO NANCY NICOL
Dear Nancy,

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) would like to respond formally to your video, The Struggle for Choice. As you know, our organization is very active in the struggle for full access to free abortion, and is portrayed in the documentary. Many OCAC activists viewed it at the Ontario premiere, and after a discussion at our May 26, 1987 meeting, unanimously agreed that we must outline to you our serious concerns.

We welcome constructive criticism and dialogue on our strategy and tactics, and appreciate your right to a differing point of view. Our concern with the video is not its abstract and dogmatic position on how to build a movement, but its apparent dishonesty in presenting OCAC's views and any other information or opinion that does not fit the video's political line.

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics does not have a legal strategy for achieving access to abortion. It has a mass action orientation, and believes that the only way to win full access to free abortion for all women, and eventually full reproductive rights, is to build a broad based movement that will put forward its demands as visibly and vigorously as possible. Demands are won through the strength of a movement. The

state acted against us, and we see the trials as part of the broader struggle, a struggle involving thousands of women and men across Canada and Quebec mobilizing to fight for abortion rights. The video appeared to us to be dishonest, and the devices it uses to support its main criticism that OCAC is capitulating to a legal strategy are misleading.

OCAC views the video as a fundamental distortion of our political position, and a sectarian attack. We are outraged that you could have so blatantly misrepresented our perspectives, and do not accept it as an honest documentation of the struggle. We demand that you recall it until the following changes are made:

- OCAC must be allowed to state its own political position without distortion. You conducted a long interview with three representatives: Deb Gardner, Andra Takis, and Judy Rebick. We cannot accept your rationale that there were no parts of that interview which did not clearly outline our political views. This must be included.
- You must correct the misleading editing of the remarks of Carolyn Egan in which she is outlining her views on our strategy. The manner in which her comments are edited seriously distorts her views and our perspective.

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Unionists picnic against free trade at Queen's Park

N. Farmer

SEXUAL POLITICS

by Carolyn Egan

This is a synopsis of a presentation made by IWDC at the recent Coalition of Gay Rights in Ontario AGM.

It's important to reflect on the future of the lesbian and gay movement. In the fall we saw the passage of Bill 7, which included sexual orientation in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Activists organized community support, phone-ins, lobbying and a very successful rally of over 1500 at St. Lawrence Market. Labour, women's organizations, churches and other representative organizations showed their support to force the passage of the bill. The mass demonstrations, which took place a number of years ago after the bath raids, set the context for the eventual passage. Although the lesbian and gay community is not organized today, as it was in response to that state harassment, the government understood that the potential for mass organizing was there.

It was a significant victory. We now have at least minimum protection in this province, but it's a long way from ending lesbian and gay oppression. Much more than our civil rights is required. The task for activists

is to continue the struggle against homophobia, heterosexism and the structures that maintain them. The strategic question is how to do it. As socialists we believe that there will never be lesbian and gay liberation under capitalism. The class structure with its laws and institutions maintains and perpetuates racism, sexism and heterosexism, and they will never be eradicated until this is changed. But they must also be the focus of specific struggle today. In fighting lesbian and gay oppression we are questioning fundamental tenets of this society, one of which is the regulation of sexuality. Most working class and social movements don't regard organized resistance to sexual regulation as being within the realm of serious politics. It has not been integrated into political perspectives or practice.

Sexual regulation and its role in social relations affects all people, and we have to work within the movements so that an understanding of this is an integral part of all political struggle. Otherwise lesbian and gay liberation will always be politically marginalized. This is not to say that we

must not maintain our autonomous organizations and caucuses, but it is important for us in groups and as individuals to be active in the working class and social movements. None of us is solely lesbian or gay. We are trade-unionists, anti-racist activists, feminists, community workers. As we participate in these struggles, we must make it clear that unequal social relations and social forms are unacceptable, and fighting them must be part of any program for change. These movements must be challenged to understand, and concretely work to end the oppression of lesbians and gays, and all sexual regulation. They must also understand how they play a part in that oppression, by not fully integrating the fight against heterosexism into their political perspective. It's not merely a question of public defense of our civil rights. It is a much more fundamental challenge of attitudes toward sex and sexuality, which are used to regulate all of us, gay or straight. If others understand that it is their fight as well, we will all be much further ahead.

Our goal is to transform society by doing away with class oppression, racism, sexism and heterosexism. Only in alliance, fighting with others, will we be able to do this. And in the process we will hopefully break down the barriers of race, sex and sexuality, building a broad based, radical movement of which lesbian and gay liberation is an integrated part. Coalition politics link and integrate struggles, ideally helping each constituency to broaden its consciousness of another's oppression, and take seriously a much wider range of issues than they otherwise would. This is absolutely crucial if we are ever to build the unity necessary to make change, and fight the oppressions we suffer. ■



Anti-censorship contingent rallies at Lesbian and Gay Pride Day



10,000 supporters celebrate Lesbian and Gay Pride Day

A Call to Action

by Mary Gellatly

Pro-choice supporters across Canada and Quebec will be taking to the streets in October in support of the day of action called by the Quebec coalition a l'avortement libre et gratuit (Quebec coalition for the right to free abortion on demand). In the face of increasing attacks on access to abortion services and the impending Supreme Court decision, the bi-national movement will organize regional actions to demand the repeal of the federal abortion law, a halt to funding cut-backs, and the legalization of free-standing clinics providing medically insured abortion services.

We have looked to Quebec as a relative "oasis of sanity" which, over the past ten years, has had the widest access to safe abortion services in women's health centres, government sponsored CLSC's (centre local de services communautaires), free-standing abortion clinics and hospitals. These gains are tenuous, however, while the federal abortion law under

the criminal code remains in effect. Indeed, the last few years have witnessed serious attacks on women's access to abortion services in Quebec. The anti-choice forces have taken over the CLSC boards in St. Therese and Quebec City, abolishing their abortion services, and they continue costly legal action against clinics and staff. More pervasive attacks have come from the state with the Bourassa government's severe funding cut-backs. By stopping health insurance coverage for anesthesia used during procedures, the government has effectively reduced by 50% the funding to clinics for abortions. The result has been decreasing access to abortion procedures, increased second trimester procedures, and increased traveling time and expense for women seeking abortion services.

As so clearly demonstrated in Quebec, our control over reproduction and sexuality will remain under attack as long as the draconian federal abortion law exists. During the next few months, the Supreme Court of Canada will

rule on whether to uphold the Ontario Court of Appeal's decision to set aside the jury acquittal of Drs. Morgentaler, Scott and Smoling. Many possibilities exist from striking down the law on the one hand to sending the doctors back for another jury trial on the other. The Supreme Court decision will catapult the pro-choice movement into a new phase in the struggle. Yet, as our sisters in the U.S. can attest, repealing the law will not be enough to ensure access. We must continue to build a broad-based visible bi-national movement working for full and equal access to community health clinics providing medically insured abortion services and the material conditions necessary for women to control our reproduction and sexuality.

The Quebec Coalition's call to action for October will be significant in building the bi-national movement's momentum for the next stage of the struggle for women's reproductive freedom. Representing over 500 member groups and individuals, the Quebec Coalition already has support from the Quebec NDP, CSN (Quebec Teachers Federation), QFL (Quebec Federation of Labour), CEQ (Confederation of National Trade Unionists), and many women's groups. They will march on the Quebec National Assembly on October 18, 1987 with the following demands:

- * repeal the federal abortion law;
- * stop cutbacks to abortion services; and
- * stop government and anti-choice harassment of women, staff, clinics and CLSC's.

Across Canada, the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, and the newly formed B.C. Coalition for Abortion Clinics have endorsed the call and are planning actions. Other regions such as Edmonton and St. John's, Newfoundland, and others are also discussing the possibility of organizing actions.

Stay tuned to Rebel Girls Rag for details...

BOOK REVIEW

Double Day, Double Bind

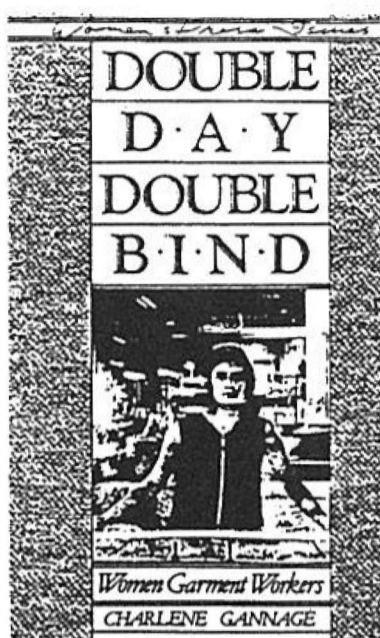
by Charlene Gannage
Toronto, Women's Press 1986,
235 pp. pb.

by Mariana Valverde

Immigrant women have been an important part of the Canadian workforce for many decades, but they have often been taken for granted by business and ignored by both feminists and sociologists. In recent years the women's movement has begun to rectify this neglect, and the first book-length studies of immigrant women in Canada are being published by researchers who are both active in the women's movement and themselves feminists. Roxana Ng's forthcoming book (Garamond Press, 1987) promises to be a key source; and Tania Das Gupta's Learning From Our History (Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 1987), which is a history of Ontario immigrant women's organizations shows that immigrant women have been organizing for decades, not just years.

Charlene Gannage's book is a study of women textile workers in Toronto's garment district. It is particularly timely because this industry is in danger of being decimated, if not eliminated, by the current free trade negotiations. Gannage describes the human element of this supposedly backward and redundant industry in such a moving way that nobody who reads this book could coldly advocate free trade with the U.S. and all its implications.

In keeping with feminist methodology, Gannage does not only give us a picture of living human beings where traditional sociology gives us disembodied abstractions and charts; she also puts herself in the picture, without pretending that her presence as an investigator in the shop makes no difference to what is being observed. She shares with the readers her



dilemma about whether to tell the workers about her own ethnic origin (Arab), given that many of the workers are Jewish.

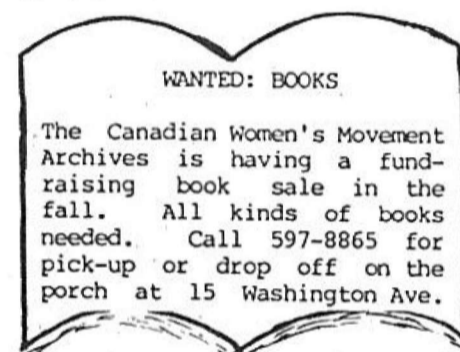
The garment industry is an interesting case study of the inter-relations among gender, class, ethnicity and skill because its labour force has always been extremely fragmented, not just along gender and ethnic lines but also according to a very complicated system of craft and non-craft jobs, which is well explained here. Men are cutters, pressers, and do other "skilled" jobs, whereas women dominate only one craft, finishing, which is not given equal status with the other crafts.

The union structure replicates rather than challenges the hierarchy of socially constructed "skill" categories. Male domination within the union is both mediated by and constructed through craft and skill concepts, and is harder to challenge than if it were based solely on gender distinctions. Gannage does not draw theoretical conclusions from this, but her information contributes to current socialist feminist thinking on this question (see for instance Cynthia Cockburn's book Brothers, a brilliant study of the relation between male privilege and the social construction of skill in British newspaper typesetting).

Gannage is critical of the business unionism that has prevailed in the United Gar-

ment Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union; however, since when she was finishing the book the ILGWU was engaged in its first strike in 50 years, there is a strong note of optimism in her account, which perhaps gives a somewhat false impression of the previous fifty years and of the union as a whole.

Double Day, Double Bind is quite readable (except for an early methodological chapter which is best skipped), and ought to be considered a contribution not only to the ghettoized area of immigrant women's studies, but to research on Canadian women generally. ■



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The Ontario Coalition for
Abortion Clinics

P.S. To date, Nancy Nicol has refused to meet with us to discuss our criticisms but has agreed to re-edit the interview with Carolyn Egan and to delete the comment on the escort service. ■

Mystery on Harbord St.

CONCLUSION

by Dorothy Doers

As her plane was landing in the Tehran "Holy War International Airport" Mona told the stewardess she had to go to the market, to work on her thesis on shopping. The stewardess looked at Mona's 1950s Sally Ann outfit and smirked, but gave Mona advice on how to get around in Tehran.

When Mona had retrieved her zebra-pattern plastic bag, she hailed a taxi. "Take me to the Cafe De La Guerre, in the market." The driver steered through the traffic of donkeys, soldiers, trucks and motorcycles so fast that Mona began to look for her OHIP card in her purse; but he got her to her destination safely.

Once at the cafe, she ordered a "western" coffee and sat on the crowded sidewalk, wondering how she could learn anything about Henry's whereabouts. Two coffees and an hour later, the proprietor approached her and in broken English asked her if she was looking for anyone.

"As a matter of fact I am" Mona replied. "A short man, mostly bald, bearded, about 60 years old, Jewish looking ...". As soon as she had said that she realized her mistake but it was too late. The cafe owner looked at her

strangely and said, "Oh yes, I know this man. He live in rug store. There." And he pointed across the square. Mona decided to go and investigate.

A large sign over the store advertised Persian rugs in French and what she presumed to be Persian. She rehearsed saying "small rug" in French; her cat would always appreciate it even if she didn't find Henry.

Meanwhile, back at the West Edmonton Mall, Bea and Violet were working their first shift at the donut shop, which apparently did not run extensive credit checks on its employees. During her coffee break, Bea wandered over to the submarine pond. "Closed for Repairs", a sign said on the gate. The submarine was sitting idly, half in and half out of the water. No employees were around.

The sight of the submarine reminded her of the weird conversation she had heard weeks earlier, while she was a waitress at Fran's in Toronto. "Under the water", those guys had said. She scratched her head through her beehive. She walked around the fence surrounding the pond. Suddenly, the loud Muzak that dominated

the Mall went off, and in the eerie silence she thought she could hear voices in the sub. "I guess they're the repairmen." But wouldn't repairmen have equipment and yellow trucks? She looked around and quickly leaped over the fence.

A minute later she was lying on the ground, hidden from the shoppers by a bush, and with her ear as close to the submarine hull as she could get without falling in the pond. "As long as the Muzak is malfunctioning, I should be able to hear them", she thought.

A male voice, Anglo, was saying: "And now we have problems with our friends in Holy Land, if you know where I mean. They have caught on to the fact that our man is not as famous in Canada as we had said, or not famous in the right places."

Bea's heart began to pound. Another voice, this one with a foreign accent, said: "Well Peter, you certainly bungled this one. My brothers and I, we thought you were, how you say it, out to dinner, on the question of getting Islamic fundamentalists involved in this; but we went along because we thought you knew the Canadian government. And now

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- Delete the false statement that OCAC is pursuing a legal strategy because it has faith in the state and the courts.
- Delete the total fabrication that OCAC stopped the escort service because it would have harmed a legal strategy.
- Correct the counterposing of Janet Mahwhinney's interview with news clips of Judy Rebick which misleadingly puts their views in contradiction.
- Acknowledge the political contribution of the Morgentaler campaign and the women's movement to the struggle in Quebec.
- Correct the false impression achieved by using com-

ments out of context to counterpose OCAC and Quebec activists.

- Correct the counterposing of OCAC's strategy with a mass action strategy at the end of section five.

This video in our opinion is a serious distortion of the real history of the abortion rights movement. The documentary genre has some rules, with the most important being that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If criticisms are leveled, they should be put forward in a way that can be responded to. What your work does is to put forward a false notion of OCAC's politics, and then proceed to criticize it. Any information that does not support your political line appears

to be excised; extraneous or incorrect information that fits the theory is incorporated.

We ask you to recall your video until these changes are made. We need a documentation of our struggle, one that does not edit in such a way that it appears to reconstruct reality in the interest of a political line. Building a mass movement may be both our goals, but some of us are trying to do it in reality where it is a little more complicated than through the camera's eye. We challenge you politically and artistically to deal respectfully with the many women and men who have worked so hard in the struggle for abortion rights by allowing them to speak for themselves.

We hope to hear from you shortly.

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the government is not doing what you said it would do."

Bea had heard enough. She leaped back across the fence, went to get Violet at the donut shop, and conferred with her on how to reach Mona. As they whispered to each other while serving vile coffee, a well-dressed male customer looked at them piercingly. He asked: "You aren't by any chance talking about the shopping scholar and socialist feminist sleuth, Mona Lott?" Bea and Violet were thunderstruck. "How do you know?" said Bea. "Who are you?" said Violet.

"Well, I am her brother-in-law. Here's my card." They looked at the raised letters in green plastic. "Lord Bleuberri, specialist in plastic plants." And then a London, England address and number... and a Tehran telex number. "Oh", said Bea, "You must use your Tehran office and get Mona immediately. We think we have the solution to the mystery."

A couple of phone calls later, Lord Bleuberri said to the girls: "Well, Mona is coming back all right --with none other than Henry. He was found in a rug store, guarded by two young guys with machine guns who didn't seem to care about him any more. Mona promised to send them six pairs of Levis jeans from Canada if they let him go, and they did. Now, let's go back to the sub and see if the men are still in it."

The three of them leaped over the fence and took up listening posts on the edge of the pond. Half an hour later, they had heard everything they needed, and they called Mona's group in Toronto, Sisters in Struggle, to fly to

Edmonton and make a citizens' arrest en masse.

The next day, Mona, Henry, the rebel girls from Sisters In Struggle, Bea, Violet and Lord Bleuberri were all celebrating in the donut shop in the mall. Mona asked: "But what exactly was going on in the submarine?" Bea said: "Well, this guy, Peter Pockmark, was being berated by the Grimy brothers for his stupid plan. He'd convinced the Grimies to hire a few loose cannons they knew in Tehran to fly to Harbord Street, kidnap Henry and take him away; the poor guys were given all these newspaper cuttings showing that Henry was the best-known person in Canada next to the Prime Minister, so they thought they could get a huge ransom and use it to buy ammunition, not to mention genuine American jeans. But of course the Department of Justice was not keen on forking over any money, since Henry being away was all too convenient for them." Lord Bleuberri asked: "But who really wanted to kidnap Dr. Henry?" Mona explained to him, "You see, there was a group involving Pockmark, Barbara Schmiel, REAL women, and a couple of Tory backbenchers to create chaos in the government by forcing them to either pay a ransom for Henry, which would discredit them with the right wing, or else let him be assassinated, which would also look pretty bad. They wanted to have a coup, fire all the postal workers, make abortion illegal, and make Thatcher Queen of Canada."

"Oh my god" said Lord Bleuberri, who always voted Labour despite being a Lord.

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was characterized by testimony of torture, coerced witnesses and shaky evidence - routine occurrences in South Africa's system of injustice. Theresa, 23 at the time of her arrest and a worker in a roadhouse, has been tortured and has suffered further injuries while in police custody. Theresa's case is not an isolated one.

For women, who hold primary responsibility for the care of children and sustaining the household, detention is particularly treacherous. Infants accompany their mothers to prison; small children are left behind. Mothers are left behind as their children are detained, arrested, tortured. Women in custody are also vulnerable to sexual assault at the hands of the police.

We urge you to lend your active support to the international campaign to "Stop the Execution of Theresa Ramashamola!", "Release all Detainees and Political Prisoners!" and "Allow the Safe Emergence of Activists in Hiding!"

"Well, it's a good thing the Rebel Girls came in on time." The Rebel Girls gave a collective smirk. They had threatened to turn the conspirators over to the RCMP if they did not do as they were told. The whole group of them, headed by Pockmark, were standing dutifully outside the postal station in the Mall --doing picket duty.

"Three cheers for Mona, Bea, and Violet!" shouted the Rebel Girls, raising their coffee cups. "And now can we go back to Fran's?" asked the three women in unison. ■

END

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