

CAMBIANDO DESDE ADENTRO:
EL CENTRO PARA LA INVESTIGACION Y ATENCION A LA MUJER (CIAM,
A.C.)
DE GUADALAJARA

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*Introduction*¹

First, I would like to thank publicly all the members of CIAM, A.C., the Center for Research and Attention to Women, for opening their organization, homes and hearts to me during 1994-1995 while I was doing my fieldwork in Guadalajara. Rebeca Rosas, CIAM's coordinator at that time, deserves my particular gratitude for opening up countless opportunities for me in the city, and Beatriz Bustos of this panel for her assistance in researching this paper after my departure from Guadalajara. Some of this paper is informed by conversations I had with Rebeca, other members of CIAM and other feminists in Guadalajara. I chose this forum at Latin American Studies Association International Congress because I hope it will be a space in which to promote dialogue among feminist groups in Guadalajara.

This paper raises particularly issues of voices. There is of course the issue of my own voice: Who was, (and who am) I, an outsider who spent only a few months here, to offer this sort of analysis? I decided to write this paper in part because at the end of my year in Guadalajara, CIAM asked me, along with Marisa Isabel Núñez Bustillos, to facilitate a day of evaluation of the center, its mission and activities; this paper continues that transnational dialogue. That day we employed a dialectical conceptualization of evaluation, which meant a constant negotiation between reflection and praxis. It has been two years since I have been actively involved in the day-to-day praxis of the center, but perhaps that reflective space might prove fertile ground for initiating practices useful to the on-going development of feminisms indigenous to Guadalajara. And, my hope is that these insights, despite or perhaps because of their time-lag, will be useful to CIAM as it works to stay faithful to its mission as it plans its economic future.

CIAM and its search for identity

What is that mission? Developed during a weekend-long workshop² CIAM's mission states that:

¹ This research was funded by an I.I.E. Fulbright grant for August, 1994 - May 1995. Preliminary research was also conducted during the summer of 1993 as part of my work as a research assistant to Dr. Henry Selby's National Science Foundation project comparing households in Guadalajara, Mexico, and Tucumán, Argentina. I am indebted to him, as well as to my hosts at the Department of Socio-urban Studies at the University of Guadalajara, especially its Chair, Dr. Fernando Pozos Ponce, and my interviewing partners, Mstra. Beatriz Bustos Torres and Lic. Elena Dolores Navarro. Special thanks also to the family who opened their home and hearts to me the year I lived in their city, who prefer to remain anonymous; to Rebeca Rosas and my other compañeras at CIAM (Centro de investigación y atención a la mujer/Center for Research and Attention to Women); and to those at the University of Texas at Austin who helped me to launch this project, particularly Dr. James Brow, Dr. Edmund T. Gordon of my dissertation committee, Dr. Ivy McQuiddy of the Study Abroad office, and to then fellow student, now Dr., Judy Mohr Peterson for her advice and support. Gönül Ertem's, De Ann Pendry's and Jennifer Burtner's comments are also appreciated.

² The workshop was facilitated by GEM, the Grupo de Educación Popular con Mujeres (Group of Popular Education with Women), a non-governmental organization based in Mexico City.

CIAM (Center for research and attention to women) is a center created in 1993 by a pluralistic group of women with experience in work with gender, that through research, training, and offering services -- psychological, medical and legal -- promotes the construction of a culture of equity between the genders, with women from different social sectors in the State of Jalisco and with groups and non-governmental organizations in Mexico.³

CIAM also decided during that workshop to create three tiers of membership. One was 'active' membership, which gave the member full voting rights and access to all CIAM strategic planning meetings. It also required that the holder of this status not belong to other women's organizations. The stated concern was that by this restriction, CIAM would project a clear image and its members would not suffer conflicting loyalties. Those who wanted to maintain their affiliations with other groups could be 'collaborating associates,' involved in activities but not fully a part of decision-making. This was eventually my status. There was also a third category of 'honorary' associates, which implied that the title's holder supported CIAM's mission, and could be drawn upon for occasional assistance.

There were other kinds of diversity among CIAM's 20 or so members. There were housewives, professionals and students. While most of the women were middle- and upper-class, their ages ranged from upper teens to early sixties, with most in their forties. Some of CIAM's members knew each other through political connections, but not from a single source: there were women represented from all three of the dominant Mexican political parties, the National Action Party (PAN), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Democratic Revolutionary Party, (PRD).

All members of CIAM during the workshop supported the vision this mission expressed. There was consensus that CIAM's focus should be on working with urban women, investigating some of the problems that affect them, such as not knowing their rights nor how to exercise them; improving familial relations; diminishing violence within and outside the household; and enhancing women's emotional and physical health.

For example, one project was "Divulgación de los derechos de la Mujer en Jalisco" (Promotion of women's rights in Jalisco). Lic. Ma. Luisa del Obeso, an attorney and now the head of CIAM, along with two other lawyers, offered low-cost legal services for family law cases, most of them divorces, and a seminar open to the public explaining family law. Another staff member was a homeopath, and offered this kind of medical treatment along with psychological counseling. Two other psychologists assisted her both

³ El CIAM (Centro para la Investigación y Atención a la Mujer) es un centro creado en 1993 por un grupo plural de mujeres con experiencia en trabajo de género, que a través de la investigación, la capacitación, y la prestación de servicios -- psicológicos, médicos, y legales -- promovemos la construcción de una cultura de equidad entre los géneros, con mujeres de diferentes sectores sociales en el Estado de Jalisco y con grupos y organizaciones de la sociedad civil en México.

This translation and all others in this paper are my own, with editorial assistance from DeAnn Pendry.

in counseling individual women and planning a weekly support group for women with troubled relationships with their husbands. Another psychologist and I organized a support group for single mothers. There were also several seminars and workshops for CIAM members, designed to educate ourselves about gender theory and its implications for working with women.

Debates and dissension

There was also at one time proposed a workshop for sexual education in preschools. This event never happened, because the woman spearheading it eventually left CIAM for other feminist groups, along with other women who wanted a more activist organization. Their dissatisfaction with CIAM, as I saw it, had to do both with different philosophies of feminist politics, and power struggles within CIAM itself.⁴ Some of these women had pre-existing commitments to other women's organizations in Guadalajara. The second tier of "collaborating" but not "active" membership I just described was designed to be a kind of compromise to those women who wished to maintain prior affiliations. But, it was rejected by many of those who might have filled its ranks, who chose to withdraw entirely rather than quit their other affiliations, or be relegated to second tier.

What divided CIAM in these early days was the different ways members had of articulating -- or not -- their relationship to feminism and what that implied with respect to activist political activity. This difference openly fueled debates at meetings, and earnest conversations about how best to conceptualize of gender. And, it expressed itself covertly, in matters of style. Some members were more concerned with propriety, while others felt comfortable adopting behaviors and positions that would put them more directly into conflict with established social norms among Guadalajara's middle and upper-classes. For example, we can consider sexual issues: some more liberal members were comfortable with lesbianism and abortion, other more conservative members were at most still interrogating themselves about their positions, if they were not firmly opposed to promoting a change in traditional sexual mores. Given Guadalajara's generally socially conservative climate, and the influence of orthodox Catholicism on the development of its cultural practices, this difference (among others -- although this was particularly salient) contributed to disagreements about programming. One CIAM faction proposed programs that might have challenged Guadalajara's dominant constructions of sexual norms, and so inherently appeal to only a minority of the city's population. Other members felt committed to maintaining a reformist perspective, and would work to appeal to the mainstream, avoiding controversy.

Searching for sources of economic support

⁴ This schism is consistent with two common themes that Stephen found in the efforts of women's groups to forge a collective identity: "varying definitions of feminism" and "internal democratization and the creation of new forms of political culture" (1996: 7).

So, there were consequent confusions within CIAM regarding whose interests the organization would serve. All women? Those in need of the psychological, medical and legal services it offered? Should specialized seminars be marketed to middle- and upper-class women, who could afford to pay a hefty entrance fee, and in so doing subsidize services for lower-income women?⁵ Finances were a constant source of worry, since the organization was supported by its members,⁶ whose budgets became more and more strained after the peso was devalued in December of 1994. Rather than engaging in this volunteerism and "auto-philanthropy," CIAM's members would prefer to have been paid for their long hours of service. Since the network of philanthropic institutions is not highly developed in Mexico, the most obvious external funding sources were international foundations and the Jalisco state government. Work began on researching foreign grants. CIAM had already received some seed money from the Secretary for Social Development (SEDESOL) in Jalisco. Given this need to raise money, how would CIAM negotiate its relationship with a state agency whose representatives were not necessarily nor uniformly committed to CIAM's vision of constructing a culture of equity between the genders? And, what effect would the apparent necessity of garnering state support have on relationships between CIAM and other non-governmental organizations in Guadalajara?

The title of this paper, "Cambiando desde adentro", was the theme of a 1995 commemoration of International Women's Day, held at the Feminine Rehabilitation Center in Guadalajara. Its promotional leaflets called out "!Ya es hora! de Cambiar desde Adentro." This paper will analyze that event, which I attended. The goal of this analysis is to consider how this tendency to prefer 'change from within' -- consistent with this panel's theme of 'resisting resistance' -- characterizes CIAM during 1994 - 1995. This preference can be seen in the character of CIAM's activities, which tended to target individual women, and in the reformist role CIAM envisioned for itself in Guadalajaran society and political life. Few of CIAM's members would rally round a banner proclaiming that 'no somos feministas', like the one I saw hanging on the wall of a gathering of another women's group in Guadalajara, *Círculo de Mujeres para México y por México* (Circle of Women for and by Mexico). Yet, no one was offended when I once openly observed that I thought I felt at home at CIAM because like them, I was a 'burguesa' too. There was an almost genteel atmosphere at CIAM that I believe contributed to the eventual split between, using a convenient shorthand, the radicals who left CIAM for other, fiercer politics, and the liberals who stayed and built up CIAM as an institution. This institutionalization, and the fact that those who left were members of the PRD while the current president has close personal connections with PANista politicians, suggests that CIAM was in a position vis-a-vis the Jalisco state government to negotiate for funding.

⁵ For example, one workshop "Anthropology of the Woman: relations between mothers and daughters", was facilitated by an anthropologist from Mexico City, Dr. Marcela Lagarde. Held on January 28-29, 1994, it was open to the female public over the age of 18. One hundred women attended, each paying N\$150. This event was before the peso's devaluation, and would have cost about US\$50.00. Dr. Lagarde charges for her services, but I do not know how much. She returned in June to a similar audience, this time for a seminar on "Methodology of working with women". Apparently due to her popularity in January, this time the price was \$N20 more if one did not register a week early. As this event and its price tag imply, CIAM's members and its supporters were largely from Guadalajara's professional class.

⁶ Dues are \$N50 a month.

For example, it now has a project to promote women's rights, "Y only want to know what rights Y have," financed by the Secretary for Social Development (SEDESOL). The project is paying the four members working on CIAM's human rights team, and the work will be finished April 19, 1997. The team visited 10 colonias in the city's margins, and sponsored workshops informing women there about their rights with a focus on familial communication. CIAM's survival and development⁷ indicates that its voice has strengthened. Could this be time, ironically, to listen rather than to speak, to focus on a more collective politics among feminists in Guadalajara?

During my tenure in Guadalajara, CIAM was carefully delineating how it would construct an identity as a feminist organization autonomous from other organizations active in Guadalajara's women's movement. As this paper will describe, most of the non-governmental organizations had little choice but to cultivate carefully their relationships and images with the state government in Jalisco, depending on how much they needed government funding to survive. And this in turn, affected their relationships with each other, especially those other NGOs which included among their membership former CIAM affiliates. Might CIAM develop into a quasi-governmental entity, acting as a voice for "women's" concerns in the city, but not be truly positioned to represent the diversity of the collectivity of women's politics in the city, given its own insistence on maintaining itself distinct from them? I raise this concern to those who will hear this paper, for your own reflection, and cannot assess now what has happened with CIAM since I left Guadalajara two years ago.⁸

But, we can consider the seeds of how NGOs relationships with the State affect their individual and collective voices, by examining a visit twelve of them (including CIAM)⁹ took to the Center for Feminine Readaptation, as the women's prison was

⁷ During the summer of 1996, CIAM received funding from the bank Pro-Mex which is covering its expenses until the end of 1997. They used some of the money to rent a house in which to situate its offices. The building is adjacent to a smaller building they rented during their first years.

⁸ I do hope, however, to meet with CIAM during the week before the conference to update the information provided here, and to incorporate their comments and critique during the panel discussion.

⁹ The other sponsoring organizations were CAMPO, A.C. (Comité de Apoyo al Movimiento Popular de Occidente, A.C./ Committee for support of the Western Popular Movement) which worked with women in rural areas; CEG (Centro de Estudios de Género/Center for Gender Studies) of the University of Guadalajara; MMC (Women in Communication Media); Fundación de Reintegración Social del Estado de Jalisco, A.C. see footnote 11.; Oasis, A.C., a lesbian group; Patlatonalli, A.C. another lesbian and AIDS advocacy group; PEG (Programa de Estudios de Género/Program for Gender Studies) of the University of Guadalajara; Radio Mujer (Women's Radio); and IMDEC, A.C. (Instituto Mexicano para el Desarrollo Comunitario/Mexican Institute for Community Development). Also listed were CEDEJO, A.C. and MUSP-R. Occidente, but no explanation of their acronym was in the program nor mention made of them during the day.

Patlatonalli's and Oasis' membership were mainly lesbians. These two groups, along with, Mujeres en Medios de Comunicación (MCC, or Women in Communication) were privately funded. Aside from CEDEJO and MUSP, about which I know little, all of the others received some form of support from the state government of Jalisco.

Membership sometimes overlapped; for example, one of the women had worked for the Mexican Institute for Community Development (IMDEC), joined CIAM and then quit, was on at the time of the prison visit affiliated with the Center for Gender Studies and belonged to MMC. The Circle of Women for and by Mexico, who are supported by members' donations, attended but were not sponsors of the event.

euphemistically called. There, the newly-elected governor's wife would literally steal a show meant to commemorate International Women's Day, 1995.

"!Ya es hora: de cambiar desde adentro"

The thinking of the event's organizers, this dozen of non-governmental organizations working with and for women in Guadalajara went as follows: Shouldn't a celebration of International Women's Day include all women? How would incarcerated women join in commemorating it, unless women outside the bars, walls, chainlinks and sentries were to go and join the prisoners?¹⁰ The NGOs' logic¹¹ was that all women were captives, sharing in some way the experience of imprisonment. When interviewed for the newspaper Siglo XXI, there was a diversity of meaning given to 'changing from within'. For example, Guadalupe López, leader of Patlatonalli, a lesbian and AIDS advocacy group in Guadalajara, and one of the women who had withdrawn from CIAM, explained that in addition to raising specifically women's consciousness of shared female oppression, the lemma meant that "se necesitan también cambios profundos en la relación entre mujeres y hombres, desde adentro" (we also need profound changes in the relation between men and women, from within) (Siglo XXI, March 8, 1995, p. 3). Generally speaking, though, the proposed route to liberation was a change of consciousness, expressed in the day's theme, "de cambiar desde adentro", to change from within.

In addition to this well-intentioned bid to bridge differences in subjectivity, the women who attended were motivated in varying degrees by their commitment to the women's movement and their local version of it, to indulging an admittedly voyeuristic curiosity.¹² What would most determine the nature of the discursive articulations that marked interaction with the prisoners was the presence of Jalisco's First Lady, Sra. Joann Novoa Mossberger de Cárdenas, and the NGOs' relation to the State power she embodied. Her husband's PANista gubernatorial administration was barely a week old. Inviting his wife was an opportunity for the NGOs to make good first impressions, and would bring more publicity to the event.¹³

¹⁰ In a version of what Anderson (1983) argues, the NGOs realized that these incarcerated members of their 'imagined community' would not realize their shared citizenship in a global nation of women, since they were cut off from news of the world outside the prison walls.

¹¹ Following de la Garde (1990), who consulted with many of their organizations.

¹² One of the members of CIAM remarked at a meeting to evaluate the visit that really the visitors were half-using the prisoners. It was we who entered there full of curiosity, knowing that in a few hours we could leave. No one countered her remark.

¹³ It was specifically through Sra. Cristina Aguilar, that Jalisco's new First Lady had been invited to the program. Sra. Aguilar's organization, Jalisco's Center for Social Reintegration, helped prisoners adjust to their newfound lives after they finished serving their sentences. She had just accepted a new position as head of Women in Solidarity, a program organized within the DIF, the System for Integral Family Development, Mexico's social welfare branch. As First Lady, Sra. Cárdenas would automatically be appointed President of the DIF, which would also oversee some programs in the women's prison. It was important then, for both Sra. Aguilar and the prison director, that nothing disrupt the power balance already established as normal between prisoners and their overseers, since this would obviously not please their new boss.

Setting the stage

The event took place in an open air hall, but within it seating was segregated. In front of the stage at one end was a table for especially notable visitors, such as the First Lady and her entourage, and some of the NGO leaders. The other women visiting sat behind them in chairs, as a few reporters milled around. The style and presentation of these women varied accordingly, be they professionals, academics, activists or housewives, but most were upper- and middle-class.¹⁴ The prisoners, seated at picnic tables at the back of the hall, formed a monochromatic strip between the multi-colored clothing of their guests and the blue of the guards, who leaned against the back wall, strategically located to survey their charges.¹⁵

I asked one of the prisoners if attendance was obligatory. It was. Still, most of them I talked with seemed to appreciate this break in their routine, if only to experience the choreographed vitality of the dances performed by their fellow prisoners. It was a diversion, they said, although their enjoyment seemed to me vicarious and muffled.

Prisoners' and NGOs' performances

The program was a kind of variety show, with prisoners' acts interspersed with representatives of the visiting organizations taking the microphone to speak. The acts performed by the prisoners tended to emphasize two things the prisoners apparently missed. The first was a sense of bodily pleasure, a celebratory mood. During their dances, the prisoners on stage could dress in costume, feel beautiful. Other performances were more sober. A short play written by the performers, entitled "Sin libertad", (Without Liberty) was a forthright exposition of how the women in the prison felt about their confinement, including a dramatization of conflict between the fictionalized prisoners and their guard.¹⁶

When it was the NGOs' turn, the speakers all gave talks about the meaning of International Women's Day, and why they had come to the prison. Their speeches educated these captives about a particular kind of power, not a transgressive license at which the prisoners' performances hinted, but the kind of freedom that comes about with internal discipline.¹⁷ They encouraged the prisoners to think about what rights they had as

This logic was also accepted as *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977) by Sra. Aguilar's friends who belonged to CIAM and most of the other non-governmental organizations involved.

¹⁴ We had also been color-coded by the prison director's instructions. Visitors could not wear blue; that was the color of the guards' uniform. The medical professionals' white was also off-limits. And, most importantly, we were not to wear beige, the color of the clothing worn by the prisoners.

¹⁵ The positioning of the guards in the back brings to mind Foucault's description of "the Major effect" of Bentham's Panopticon: "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power". Foucault continues: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself ..." (1979:201, 202).

¹⁶ The title of the play, but not its content, was included in the Siglo XXI press account.

¹⁷ Foucault (1980:39) would clearly apply again here, leading us to view this argument as an appropriation by subjects of their own domination by State power: "in thinking of the mechanisms of

part of a worldwide community of women. No one, though, neither visitor or penal resident, broached the idea that imprisonment itself should be resisted. Rather, the day's theme, "To Change From Within," seemed only to emphasize that no other kind of change in the prisoners' lives were possible.

The State 'talks/takes' over'

Any genuine advocacy of the prisoners' desires for sexual expression and personal autonomy might have challenged the fact of their internment, which even the prisoners themselves were not fighting, only lamenting its consequences. Whatever genuine desire there was on the part of the NGOs to let the subaltern speak, to turn a phrase from Spivak (1988), was potentially dangerous, even though well-controlled already by political and class alliances between most of the NGO community gathered there, and those they had just elected. Not only the First Lady and other PANistas were there, but the wife of the PRD's candidate, Dr. Susanah Mora Lomelí, and other PRD party members. This was a politicized crowd, yes, but by no means a revolutionary one. There was a genuine, mutual though muted, desire to build some kind of coalition between the prisoners and their guests. This wish would be predicated differently, and put under control by the State's First Lady's speech and its discursive effects, what Bourdieu would call "symbolic violence" (1991).

What I think she did unwittingly was change the content of this identity the NGOs asserted women shared, the one supposedly grounded in collective imprisonment. What was expressed by the NGOs as captivity became maternity in the First Lady's talk; disempowerment and its discontents were coated and contained within an asexual, domesticated motherly sweetness. Granted, Sra. Cárdenas' speech did promise that the DIF would try to work to simplify administrative procedures which might speed some prisoners' releases. And, she spoke after the comments of an intern, Amalia Raygoza Medina, who asked that she and her fellow prisoners be thought of primarily "as women, as mothers", who want their freedom so that they could return "to the side of our children and family that we miss so much" (Siglo XXI, March 9, 1995, p. 5). The First Lady's response followed in this line, and continued to emphasize maternal identity. Overtly speaking to the prisoners, but in effect quelling her own fears apparently provoked by the criminality embodied before her, she absolved the prisoners by telling them that the women visiting knew that some of the interns' sentences were unjust. The DIF, the System for Integral Family Development, Mexico's social welfare agency, would help them to be better mothers. She announced plans to build a center for infant care at the prison. Her interpretation of the 'change from within' slogan would seem to be spiritualized, as she called the women to thank the Creator for having made "us" women,

power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives." The 'change from within' would produce a more docile, Foucauldian subject.

and for "giving us the opportunity to encounter spiritual peace".¹⁸ After she made an unexplained early exit, the prison director added that the governor's wife had left another gift for the mothers in the prison: a donation of diapers.¹⁹

Responses to the discursive coup

After the event, the NGOs met to evaluate the day. They were disappointed with the constrained interaction, and with the attention focused on the First Lady both during the event and in press accounts afterward.²⁰ Due to the DIF logo prominently displayed on the stage, it even appeared that the State had sponsored the day, not the NGOs. It was decided to go back, to continue relations with the prisoners and ask them what they thought of this effort to increase solidarity among all women in Guadalajara. The NGOs wanted to reappropriate the event.

About a week later, we returned, but before meeting with the prisoners, were called into the prison director's office for a kind of briefing. She read us a letter written by two of the inmates, and signed by 130 other prisoners. Typewritten and expressed in legalistic, respectful language, the letter's style was consistent with the emphasis of events that had been presented to the inmates as part of the history of women's political struggles around the world. For example, although as prisoners they could not vote, in the speeches they had been told about the chronology of Mexican women's enfranchisement. Here, we heard their formal petition.

The letter protested limits in food and medication, and that now mothers were expected to feed their babies from their own plates. The Director had explained to her charges that because of Mexico's economic crisis, the prison budget's sugar ration had been cut. Although there was now no *agua fresca*, sweet fruit-flavored water, and nothing to sweeten coffee, the prisoners were still getting meat, noodles, a vegetable and dessert every day. Although the inmates were cut off from the news, she felt they should accept her explanation of why the rations had been reduced.

¹⁸ As reported in Siglo XXI, March 9, 1995: "... cada día bendigamos al Creador por habernos hecho mujeres y por darnos la oportunidad de encontrar la paz espiritual".

¹⁹ Stephen (1995, 1996) argues that analysts should avoid the kind of dichotomy I am evoking here, distinguishing between movements predicated on shared maternal identity, such as the CO-MADRES of El Salvador, and 'feminist' ones. I would suggest, however, that it is important to attend to such distinctions when they are constructed by the State or representatives of the government, and so carry hegemonic power not available to the grass-roots and/or popular movements Stephen analyzes. Rather, one could compare this speech event at Jalisco's women's prison to the description Alvarez (1990) offers of authoritarian regimes can quell dissent through maternalist and familial rhetoric.

²⁰ For example, one press account by Sara Cuéllar (Siglo XXI, March 9, 1995, p. 5) was entitled "Detrás del muro" (Behind the wall), and then its subheading read: "las 197 internas del Centro de Readaptación Femenil de Jalisco celebraron ayer el Día Internacional de La Mujer a la que asistió, Joann Novoa de Cárdenas, esposa del nuevo gobernador del estado" (The 197 interns of Jalisco's Center for Feminine Readaptation celebrated yesterday International Women's Day, which Joann Novoa de Cárdenas, wife of the new governor, attended". It is not until the 4th paragraph (of an 8 paragraph article) that the article mentions that it was the NGOs, not the DIF, sponsoring the event.

I asked if there had ever been such a letter in the past, or if she thought the visit on International Women's Day had prompted the initiative. She said that although there had never been such a letter, she did not think the visit was related. Maybe there was more background to the incident than I know about, but with the information I had, I found her opinion implausible.

When we were led out of the prison director's office to go talk to the prisoners, perhaps due to the First Lady's absence, we were able to talk face-to-face with whomever of the interns cared to come and meet with us. The prisoners were ready to voice their grievances, which did not include at this time the cut in their children's food, or for medication. Instead, they talked about sugar. We had come to evaluate the program. So, they eventually talked about that.

A sore point for them had been the apparent indifference of the First Lady, since she did not stay for the whole performance. Like the NGO representatives, they were not immune to the allure of her position's prestige. It was explained to the inmates that she had also been scheduled to visit a hospital, as part of Day for the Sick. Another inmate intervened, saying that she thought even if this "Señora" were to come again, it would turn out the same. A CIAM representative, a bit annoyed that they could not understand the limitations of the First Lady's schedule, evoked the slogan, telling them that "we have to change from within." The inmate was not receptive, raising the objection about the cut in sugar rations once again.

But, the rhetorical effects of the State talked over the prisoners, and none of the NGO representative were willing to admit that this complaint had either common or 'good' sense (Gramsci 1971). Rather, the response of the CIAM representatives was to encourage the prisoners to think not quite in the First Lady's maternal terms, but certainly in familial ones, to talk about mutual rights and responsibilities as if a genuine community existed. While the prisoners who attended the meeting said they appreciated this direct contact with people from the world outside, it was clear to all that the conversation would end by our leaving the prisoners behind to go back to our homes.

Accommodations

The event, the follow-up discussion and the NGOs' resolve to return to the prison, did work to promote a kind of female solidarity. This unity, though, was not so broad as the day ambitiously envisioned. Instead, it strengthened ties among the NGOs in Guadalajara. They united to support the idea of a female community and in practice agreed to privilege this cause over what the prisoners said they wanted. The NGOs went to the prison to invite those women to join them, not to incorporate indiscriminately the inmates' concerns into their projects. The viability of whatever developing women's movement there was in Guadalajara would depend on the NGOs working together if they were to compete with the State for influence on public opinion. Yet, cultivating its favor for financial support could potentially pit the NGOs one against another, and politicize the

women's movement in ways that might mirror electoral politics unnecessarily closely. The conversation these women had with the prisoners, then, was not constrained only by differences in the women's subjectivity as individuals who lived on different sides of a prison's walls. The potentially rival positions the organizations occupied in popular and political discursive fields shaped that conversational terrain, its contours over-determined by the weighty presence of a sweet, slender First Lady.

Avoiding dichotomies

As Stephen (1996) points out, the difference between 'strategic' and 'practical' gender interests, developed by Molyneaux (1986), is largely analytic and overly dichotomized. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that while the NGOs' projects beyond organizing this day fit into one or both of these categories, the prisoners' bid for more sugar fit neither one of them. It was not strategic, because it did not address gender inequity, nor practical, at least not as conventionally applied, because it was not a struggle to meet the community's basic needs. Clearly, however, defining 'need' was what the prisoners were contesting. By literally going some distance, traveling the 20 kilometers or so outside Guadalajara, the NGOs reached their discursive limit. CIAM and most of the other representatives had no apparent means of articulating this particular interest of the prisoners into their vision of what kind of social change they would support -- and in the interests of which feminine community. Together with the prison director, the NGOs cooperated in implementing the government's goal of maintaining order in the jail.

So, am I proposing that the State is always wrong, and that affiliation with a governmental agency will necessarily mean cooptation? Alvarez (1990), in her study of the Brazilian women's movement, interestingly avoids dichotomous vision of whether or not to work with the 'State'.²¹ She avoids conceptualizing of it as a masculine monolith, inherently contributing to "women's subordinate status within the family, the market, and the State" (1990:271). She calls instead for those interested in feminist politics to consider strategically which "*regime*" is in power, and what kinds of "*political conjunctures*" are operative (1990:271-272, emphasis in the original). She calls for feminists to look for *access points*, "where concerted gender-conscious political pressure might make a difference" (1990:272, emphasis in the original). Following Alvarez, perhaps members of CIAM and other feminists in Guadalajara in their current or potential relationships with state agencies might consider what agenda that administrative branch has, and what kinds of coalitions among women's groups could serve to link the diversity of women's agendas with those specific points of access to power open during particular political conjunctures. As Jaquette argues:

a new 'political imaginary' for women is needed that can combine the virtues of solidarity with the effectiveness of interest groups, that uses autonomy to keep a critical distance but not to reject out of hand the possibilities of reform and women's active involvement in it, and that

²¹ Her study does, though, employ Molyneaux's distinction, in the form of evaluating women's organizations and their practices as "feminine" or "feminist", as does Jaquette (1994:2).

recognizes that ordinary democratic politics, though rarely heroic, are crucial to women (1994:9).

My hope is that this paper has been useful for CIAM's members and others concerned with negotiating the construction of feminisms in Guadalajara to consider how - - even while acknowledging their differences in positions and style -- to consider how best to continue looking for those "contingent moments of unity" (Stephen 1995:808). These 'moments' might then allow women to speak in chorus, if not in one voice, and so avoid being talked-over again by the government even as they work with it and each other. Approached this way, there can be advantages of a close affiliation with political parties; municipal, state and federal governments; and/or international agencies.

Chinchilla's analysis of the women's movement in Latin America also supports seeking access to State power. Yet, she reminds her readers of the importance of maintaining an external, autonomous women's movement that has adequate distance to pressure and criticize the State (1994:17). She advocates, as we did at CIAM, the importance of a 'space' where only women would come to be together, to discuss issues of concern to them and build trust in one another. Without that, "rebels get isolated and stigmatized and the rest of the women are too scared to speak up in their defense" (1994:16). I could not help when reading this sentence think of the schism in CIAM between what I have called 'liberals' and 'radicals'.

These identity differences need not be suppressed or glossed over, rather they can be addressed in a "process of constant negotiating and repositioning" (Stephen 1996:15), once acknowledged, articulated and accepted. My suggestion would be to make these issues a part of the self-evaluatory dialectic, reflecting upon the nature and implications of practice upon how best to both preserve and enlarge the space that CIAM has successfully bounded.

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