

1 Introduction

Since 1989 the countries described as 'Eastern Europe'¹ have experienced revolutionary changes, so much so that the political and economic map of Europe has been transformed. These so-called 'ex-socialist'² countries are now experiencing the rolling back of the Stalinist state forces from many of the areas previously kept under the tight grip of 'the power'.³ There have been important changes in many spheres of these societies which have had far-reaching impact on both external and domestic frameworks. This book addresses questions concerning the changing situations and positions of women within Hungarian society both in the proclaimed moves towards socialism/communism in which women were to become liberated through 'socialist' development, and in the political liberalisation which has been occurring since the mid-1980s. The drive towards 'socialism' was associated with an interventionist state within a heavily planned economic framework and a communist bureaucracy which was influential in many areas of social life. In turn, families acted to protect themselves from undue and unwanted state interference. The current period is associated with the withdrawal of the state from the public sphere. The 'rolling back' of the state and the marketisation of the economy are being carried out in an atmosphere of political pluralism which rejects the authoritarian rigidity of the previous regime. Questions about how these developments are affecting the position of women in Hungarian society and, importantly, how women are responding to these changes – working in groups and through various networks or within families, at workplaces and through political parties – form the concluding sections of the book.

WOMEN

As always it must be noted that nowhere in the world do women occupy one category. Societies differ in so many ways in terms of cultural, traditional, religious, ethnic and class complexities that conceptualising 'women' and women's oppression takes care. In

Hungary there were of course, Party women, richer women, poor women, Roma women and elderly women, and their concerns are nuanced and various. For the purposes of much of this study, 'women' is taken to mean the majority of those women who are affected by the particular policy measure or political change, under discussion. That is, the 'socialist' authorities, and now the new politicians and policy-makers in Hungary produced specific policies based on the collective of 'women' as an entity in terms of policy decisions regarding work, child-care, family policies and in other arenas. This official identification of women cut across traditional social and economic divisions. Within different areas of this work the fundamental differences are assessed between women in Hungary – in economic activities, household patterns, living arrangements, rural and urban differences – yet official decisions and policies are often made with a blanket entity 'women' in view. At other times, of course, official recognition of women is in relation to men – either as wives, mothers or carers. As is shown in Chapter 5, because decisions regarding benefits were based on 'women' as 'women workers' or 'mothers' or 'wives' this meant that no provision was made for those women (such as elderly women) who were no longer part of any of these categories.

Another aspect of studying 'women' is that women suffer inequalities on the basis of their ability to give birth and are assigned gender qualities which are socially, and often officially, constructed. The whole debate concerning rights/duties is instructive here in that women are seen to have duties in both the public and private spheres, whereas men's duties tend to be only within the public sphere. In terms of 'rights' men tend to have rights in both spheres whereas women appear only to have limited rights within both spheres, especially in terms of controlling their fertility. This gendered notion of 'rights' and 'duties' also includes the psychological and emotional factors in terms of so-called 'failures'. If men see themselves as failing within their economic responsibilities towards their families they can rationalise this in various ways, whereas if women believe themselves to be 'failing' in any one of their multifaceted obligations, then this is often viewed as something of a personal failure, a problem for themselves. Many (over)expectations placed upon women result in their direct and indirect oppression, as *women*. With this in mind, much attention is given within this work to those areas of

health (Chapter 6) and social policy (Chapter 5) which vitally affect *women's* lives, physically, psychologically and in terms of women's images of themselves (Chapter 7).

MAIN AIMS

There are two main strands to this work. The first is concerned with the situation of 'how things were/are for Hungarian women'. In outlining the changes that have occurred in Hungarian society over the past thirty years particular attention is given to the attempts by policy-makers to implement policies in relation to 'women' and child-care, and some of the debates surrounding the effects of such policies on aspects of gender equality. In certain areas policies are based on principles of equality yet there is inequality in practice: wages and child-care are two examples, and this difference between policy and practice requires explanation. Power relations are important features of any social change and this book asks how women's lives have been affected by different official conceptions of women's social roles in terms of pro-natalist policies, labour-power goals and incentives. Women have often been viewed as a flexible workforce, at times depending on whether the state needs more women-workers, more mothers or both, as is often the case.

The contention of this work – and this underlies the second strand – is that women did not become 'liberated' in any genuine sense in Hungary, in large measure because women were expected to take on extra 'duties' without a consequent problematising of men's duties/obligations. Women were needed as workers, during the intensive phase of development of the Hungarian economy up to the late 1960s and were also always needed as mothers. In addition much of the apparent paternalism *vis-à-vis* social relations engendered through the bureaucratic administrations in Hungary has to some extent become internalised by Hungarian men and women. Issues with gender dimensions such as the domestic division of labour, sexuality, domestic and sexual violence, sexual harassment, and even to some extent rape, were all 'non-issues' within Hungarian everyday thinking and sociological research. In terms of attitudes towards women in Hungary, it can be argued that there is

strong patriarchal resistance to women organising for themselves. Whether this resistance, from men and from various social groups generally, stems also in part from the 'split' nature of Hungarian society before the communist takeover, must also be considered. By this is meant that before the Second World War Hungarian society consisted of (at least) two distinct groupings – a semi-feudal set of social relations, peasant culture within the countryside and an industrialised, urban petty-bourgeoisie existence in towns and Budapest.

As will be seen in the concluding sections of this book, although it may be harder for women in Hungary to begin to organise autonomously as *women*, overcoming this resistance may in part give them a very definite sense of purpose and strengthen their resolve to change those outdated social relations. It is a complex interrelationship, changing over time, which is best explored in relation to differing aspects of women's everyday lives.

That Hungarian women's 'liberation' became subsumed within a reduced marxist analysis of 'liberation through paid, public work' actually meant that working mothers within Hungarian society suffered under the much-discussed 'double burden'. This double burden or double shift meant that women were not only exploited by this so-called 'emancipation' but were now very keen to move away from any such notions. This has particular importance in terms of any consideration of feminist analysis and the projection of women organising towards 'liberation'. Many Hungarian women who have experienced the so-called 'socialist liberation' may well begin by asking 'Whose ideas of 'liberation' are involved and what are the costs to women?'

This woman-centred analysis focuses on the construction, implementation and effects (intended and unexpected) of policy decisions as they affect women in Hungary within the broader framework of socio-political change. Feminist analyses are used throughout this work to illuminate certain considerations of the failure of 'socialist' policies to realise equality for women. The centrality of attitudes is stressed, and how such attitudes are formed and shaped. The main concentration is on those decades between 1948 and 1991, in which two revolutions took place. There are parallels between Hungary's two revolutions – the first against the 'Stalinist' system in 1956 when people might still have followed a communist road, with Imre Nagy, and the second in 1989 when moves were made away from the statist authoritarian

regime of so-called 'Soviet socialism'. In the most recent changes there appears little talk of 'socialist' or collective action and yet, given the strong internalisation of state paternalism within much discussion in Hungary – certainly in terms of the right to work and to a minimum standard of life, such issues are likely to raise all types of debate, including the not-totally discredited social democratic arguments. For women, issues of social welfare are pivotal, given their position as primary 'carers'. Marketisation will radically affect women's lives not least in differentiating between different groups of Hungarian women – women entrepreneurs, women politicians, feminists. Hungarian women are making their voices heard within their changing environments.

It is evident that two major factors mediating the situation of women in Hungary, other than actions by women themselves, are state forces and family formations.⁴ Each are given consideration in terms of power differentials, and how both state forces and families mediate women's oppression. The state authorities have legislative power over women and the power to reinforce (or not) implementation of certain policy decisions. Families in the Hungarian 'socialist' context can be seen not only as the site of women's oppression and as mediators of such oppression but also as a unit of resistance against the intrusion of the state. There were parallels here with some black family situations in Britain in terms of the way that people live within a hostile environment.

Feminist analysis is subject-centred so that women's views, aspirations and experiences are central. I had a humbling first encounter with a very friendly and extremely busy woman on a large housing estate outside Budapest. She eagerly agreed to speak to me about her life experiences in having her children, her work, and living with her husband and children in various situations, by saying 'No one has ever been interested in what I think before. I am happy to share with you my feelings and views about what *I* think' (Agnes, 1985).

INTERVENTION TOWARDS CHANGING SOCIAL RELATIONS

Just as material change cannot bring about psychological changes, so legislation cannot bring about social change. If the people on whose behalf the legislation is designed do not have a

belief in the 'rightness' of the development, or do not have the will to try to work out different ways of dealing with changes, then either the intended effects of the legislation will often not be felt or unintended consequences may arise. An example can be seen in the parental child allowance which is taken up by less than 1 per cent of Hungarian men. Equally, if legislators have a rigid hierarchy of values then the prioritisation of particular goals will often preclude certain avenues of social intervention. Of course unexpected effects of legislation can be felt regardless of the way it is implemented. Policy-makers cannot successfully predict long-term consequences of various measures, so a certain amount of redefinition takes place.

Important questions considered include: 'What are the contradictions and parallels between changes affecting women's situations – both towards a "socialist" future and away from the "socialist" development?' Consideration of the important question 'How can Hungarian women gain a more forceful voice within their society?' ends this book. It is clear that answers to this particular question remain ambiguous because the reasons women would wish to gain a greater voice differ. Certain women's groups which are very much in favour of making motherhood the top priority for all women and which argue for a woman's right to remain in the home being cared for by her husband find themselves at odds with feminist groups who believe primarily in *choice* for women to have opportunities to organise their lives in ways which they choose. Without pre-empting our consideration it can be clearly stated that, from a feminist perspective, no society exists in which women (or children and men) are truly liberated. For women to be liberated, power imbalances must be changed and men need to be liberated from some of the narrow and defensive attitudes which have shaped their consciousness.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Consideration is given to the conditions in Hungary which could aid or hinder the development of wider political participation by women at all levels of society, with some reference to the new parties which have been emerging since 1988–9. Within this the dissolution of the old hierarchical regime has created some

openings for women to be actively involved in political activity. Yet women tend to be involved 'behind the scenes'. At the first round of the elections when visiting several of the offices of the new parties when election programmes were being prepared, it was obvious that many women were busy and organising much of the work. In discussing their involvement one woman summed it up: 'We mainly support our husbands, my husband is standing and I have always supported his political work ever since our early days in the 1960s' (Ilona, 1990). Generally women spoke of their lack of time for direct political intervention, yet they seemed to spend a good deal of time organising for candidates and on other aspects of the political work. Of the 386 Members of Parliament elected only twenty-eight were women, which is the lowest ratio for four decades.

Yet it must be remembered that the formal participation by women in quotas within the 'socialist' hierarchies was actually destructive of any women's initiatives that were not officially led. This political context, in which the official Women's Council in Hungary was actually a major factor blocking the establishment of representative groups for women is fully explored in Chapters 7 and 8. As will be seen a quantitative approach is totally inadequate to encompass the discrepancy between formal and actual equality and representation of women.

Women are beginning their own struggle in the political arena. One women's group in Hungary, associated with the Young Democrats successfully organised protests against the hydroelectric dam project. Feminist organisation and networking is evidenced by the activities of the new *Feminista Hálózat* (Feminist Network) founded in May 1990. What 'feminist' has come to mean within Hungarian intellectual circles and in the everyday sense is considered in Chapter 8. It is highly unlikely that Hungarian women will wish to replicate western European feminist ideas in that their different herstories, cultural experiences and expectations for the coming years are bound to feed into different priorities and directions. This is not to say that feminist analyses of situations, their own historically and in current times, will not be made use of by Hungarian feminists and activists, but that the various directions and changes that they choose will not necessarily be similar to those of the majority of white Western feminists.

The group of women involved in the Feminist Network held an important open meeting in Budapest in June 1990 to discuss the

threat to abortion rights. The interplay between the members of the Network, several of whom have participated in various Europe-wide feminist conferences since 1990, and the women involved in political parties will be something to consider in Chapter 8. As youth culture is playing an increasingly important role within Hungarian society, the increasing popularity of the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) since the 1990 elections is important for younger women. Young people were very disillusioned with the old system and impatient for change. One facet of young women's culture seems to entail a definite rejection of aspects of their mothers' lives. Some young women in Hungary today can remember as children the strains under which many of their mothers lived – the dual burden – and many young women want something 'different' from the lives their mothers experienced.

With increasing unemployment facing large sections of the Hungarian population, particularly certain groups including many women such as unskilled textile workers, health and educational employees, and some school-leavers, the effects of consequent hardship and poverty on women, directly and indirectly, will be significant and diverse. Women working in trade unions and in community groups have important roles in attempting to intervene and to try to ameliorate and change certain situations.

TERMINOLOGY AND SOURCES

Much has been written on 'women and socialism' yet detailed concentration on European 'socialist' countries other than the USSR has been limited. A few words on the use of the term 'socialist' are needed here. This term is used partly for brevity ('so-called actually existing socialism' or some other such descriptions are a bit long-winded) and partly because this is how Hungary was often labelled in writing and discussion during this period of history. Quotation marks are used around the words 'socialist' and 'socialism' as an indication that this term is used as a short form rather than descriptively. The societies which took up the Soviet development process cannot be considered as a monolithic bloc. 'Eastern Europe' is not a particularly useful label and both Hungary and Czechoslovakia

are generally considered 'central European' along with Austria and Germany. The vast changes which have taken place in this region since 1989 have caused some discussion on such labels yet most Hungarians have never considered their country to be merely part of 'Eastern Europe', rather it is Hungary, with all the distinct historical phases and developments that have led up to the present-day society. To view Hungary as having been merely a Soviet satellite would be both harmful and short-sighted, just as ignoring the large Soviet influence apparent within Hungarian society since 1948 would be mistaken. Accordingly, Chapter 2 outlines the complexities of Hungarian history in the post-war period, up to the early 1990s.

The transformations which state and social relations have undergone over several decades in Hungary have shaped certain behaviour and ways of thinking. Changes in social relations take place slowly in Hungary. Certain of the historical-cultural developments apparent before the Second World War were actually interrupted by 40 years of 'socialist' intervention. To some extent one can see these historical processes re-emerging to continue developing in an integrative process. Something of this process was apparent in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in the re-emergence of ethnic tensions which had been subsumed under an authoritarian regime which dictated 'rights' to citizens, rather than allowed for the protection of ethnic minority rights as full human rights within a federal situation. In Hungary, the re-emergence of older developments is taking the pattern of attempts to consolidate the rural and urban Hungarian ways of life. That is, for both life-patterns to coexist and receive equal recognition as 'Hungarian'. Within the changing situation of openings to the Western market forces, this development is not necessarily smooth and harmonious. In part, the Western orientation favours extensions of urban-bourgeois social relations, yet the loss of agricultural markets in the former Soviet Union may mean that peasant cultures and social relations remain a bedrock for rural Hungarians. The two are not mutually exclusive, but the shifting balance between the dominance of one or other projected life-pattern does underlie much of the political debate concerning the way forward for Hungarian society into the 1990s and beyond. This in turn, affects how women's situation is viewed within different spheres and how women themselves look forward to change.

SOCIAL POLICY

There is much to be learnt from the Hungarian experience, particularly in the area of social policy. Whilst there are specific areas in which Hungary can be seen as something of a forerunner in policy implementation for women, there are also common threads between Hungarian policies and those of the former Soviet Union and neighbouring 'ex-socialist' states. One major factor which helps to build up a detailed study of certain aspects of life for women in Hungary is the enthusiasm and relative freedom with which Hungarian writers, academics, professionals and others expressed 'opinions' on aspects of daily life and expectations within society, in addition to carrying out work on many varied themes. Yet it is noted that such major and obvious social issues as poverty were not able to be officially recognised in Hungary from the 1940s to the early 1980s because all such ills had been 'overcome in the socialist transition'. As poverty did not exist, so the argument ran, it would be useless to make any researches into such a subject and it could also have proved politically disastrous for one's career. Indeed activists such as Ottilia Solt who were involved with helping poor people in Hungary through SZETA, the Foundation for the Poor, were harassed by the authorities as if they were criminals. Several times I discussed with these activists the levels of harassment for political oppositionists which in 1986-7 reached severe limits, such as placement in psychiatric care. Acknowledging the existence of poverty, either by writing of its proportions, or by actively helping poor people, including the large numbers of Roma (*csigani*) families, was seen as anti-state activity.

It is relevant here to mention the reliability of data from the centralised offices of the Central Statistical Office - given that absolute poverty was not recognised. By far the more useful data on income levels came from some of the *samizdat* (underground) publications such as *Beszélő* (*The Talker*) which described as accurately as possible, real situations, verified with material data. Some of the data from the Central Statistical Office is used in this work, as well as material from journals, papers and discussions in the media. Attempts are made to try to locate such material, to explain the methodological approach used or the political stance of the author(s), thereby gaining something of the background value that different studies provide. With regard to

material from the Central Statistical Office there is a wealth of statistics available which concern women but little use has been made of this as the statistics presented are very much in the 'official' mould, are generally aggregated and tend not to provide a sound basis on which to build up a broader picture. There is a group of radical statisticians at work in the CSO in Hungary who aim to carry on working to formulate some more reliable and socially useful data.

WOMEN AND 'SOCIALISM'

Two major types of studies are available concerning 'women and socialism'. First, there are case studies of women's position within Soviet-type 'socialist' states.⁵ Second, there are comparative analyses which point up the similarities between policies concerning women in various 'socialist' states, some of which argue the pros and cons for women's liberation under socialist and/or capitalist systems.⁶ From a feminist perspective many of these studies are partial because they do not attempt to examine critically the reasons and intent of the studies undertaken, nor to build up a woman-centred analysis. Much of the work that has been carried out on 'women and socialism' is insightful, even though some of it rests on assumptions about 'the woman problem' or considers women as the 'other' in men's worlds.

In their studies both Scott and Heitlinger give comparative analyses of the situation of women in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, each assuming certain 'models of development'. Within Scott's analysis it is proposed that part of the failure of these countries to promote actively and practically full equality policies for women lies in the fact that a commitment to women's equality is but one of the progressive priorities of these societies. Within this framework various possible areas of change towards a broader equality are proposed. Research into the 'politics of equality' project has been problematic in several key aspects as Hilary Pilkington points out in her work on women's situation in Russia and the former Soviet republics (see Pilkington in Corrin, 1992, p. 186). Given the relational nature of equality and the cultural construction of the category 'women' any attempts as blanket 'measurement' of equality are at best contradictory and at worst doomed to failure. In her work Heitlinger includes

certain factors accounting for the failure to implement policy, despite some commitment to 'liberation' and within her analysis she is less optimistic about the possibilities for change (Heitlinger, 1979).

In her case study concerning women in Soviet society, Gail Lapidus makes the point concerning 'revolution from above', which she believes can give an 'intentional character to outcomes that were the secondary or even unintended consequences of other choices', with women's position being shaped, 'by the broader forces set in motion by the Soviet regime and by economic and political choices in which a concern for sexual equality played a negligible role' (Lapidus, 1978, p. 5).

In similar vein Barbara Jancar's work on women's participation in Yugoslavia's national liberation movement emphasises that 'socialist' mobilisation can occur for a number of reasons, and that to achieve women's liberation as a byproduct of 'socialism' is probably the least effective mobiliser (certainly in comparison with economic necessity). Such studies tend to emphasise these factors, of exactly how women's 'liberation' is to come about, in terms of the political structure of 'socialist' societies of the Soviet type, yet little is said about what this 'liberation' involves for differing groups of women in their everyday lives or what feminists would like it to involve. Differing groups of women will define and assess their interests in various spheres in different ways and one would not expect it to be otherwise. Within her work Sharon Wolchick stresses the instrumental use of women by the male Party and governmental élite in Czechoslovakia, in terms of the cyclical mobilisation of women (Wolchick, 1979, p. 594). Certain elements of the 'mobilisation' of large numbers of women in the Hungarian context, especially with reference to such aspects of women's lives as their paid work and their 'duty as mothers', are important for this study.

Writings which attempt to compare and contrast women's lives in different countries can sometimes offer us a more nuanced framework of analysis. Such comparative works are, of course, dependent upon evidence from the specific case studies. In comparing the status of women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with that of women in the USA, Sharon Wolchick considered as part of her work, her hypothesis that sexual equality would have been more likely in 'socialist' states. This would have been the case for two reasons: (i) that the official ideology

supported women's equality which was reflected in legislation prohibiting discrimination against women in education, work and wages; and (ii) that the communist élites appeared to have 'a greater capacity to produce desired social changes' (Wolchick, 1979, p. 446). Such arguments were quite common from Western feminist analysts in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet as this work shows, there were often serious reductionist aspects to some of these analyses, and overestimations about what could be achieved for 'women' by the limited legislation of the 'socialist' hierarchies, and indeed about the actual intentions of such policy-makers.

In her discussion paper on women's emancipation under socialism as a potential model for the 'Third World', Maxine Molyneux discusses the significant advances made by 'socialist' states in promoting women's equality, whilst considering the inherent inequalities in the policies of the states analysed. Molyneux notes that such inequalities 'are often hidden behind the formal equality that women have acquired and behind the accession of women to previously unconventional occupations' (Molyneux, 1981, p. 36).

Several authors point to the persistence of the sexual division of labour in employment and the failure to lessen women's load in terms of housework,⁷ or to equalise wo/men's domestic labour and responsibilities, as significant difficulties facing 'socialist' states. Reference is also made to the crucial role which 'the family' (however defined) still plays in many 'socialist' societies.

From my own observations, a central point noted in the failure to achieve a more egalitarian environment in Hungary, is the dual nature of women's oppression linked to the ways that women are 'viewed' by men generally and how such sexism is institutionalised and reinforced. The notion of patriarchy as an analytic tool is very useful here to avoid objectifying women as 'victims' of state forces and policies. Sexism is what is being dealt with in much of this work. Not only the sexism which comes from state structures in terms of 'equal' policies that are not put into practice, but the sexism which is often much more pervasive and more difficult to get to grips with, that intrudes into people's everyday lives whether at home, school, office, factory. This sexism consists in thinking of women as having certain, specific (if not 'natural') roles that they *should* perform because they are women and it is the weight of these sexist attitudes that inform much of Hungarian women's discussions about the 'superwomen'

expectations and the guilt of not being simultaneously a 'good' mother, daughter, worker, wife, whatever. Linked with notions of personal failure if all 'duties' are not carried out successfully, the picture emerges of some women living under great stress within their everyday environments.

It is the case that most women in Hungary are discriminated against in employment and by what is expected of them in connection with housework and child-care.⁸ There is something to be learnt in terms of the active, official promotion of gender equality by analysing legislation, such as that in Sweden which is committed to 'achieving equality between the sexes by changing the role of men as well as that of women' (Scott, 1982, p. 3). Here, too, the debate concerning issues such as 'equal pay for work of equal value' in terms of say, EC Directives, could be useful (see Eberhardt, 1991, p. 37). Distinctions are made throughout this work between the impact on certain groups of women of specific government policies concerning women's equality, from the consequences of broader patterns of economic change. In other respects the distinctive orientations and priorities of Hungarian policy-makers are noted as is their impact, as well as the duality of interests apparent between researchers and planners and more importantly, between women themselves.

IDEOLOGY OF 'SOCIALISM'

Hungary has its own 'specifics' in terms of historical development and experience. One of these has been the experience of rule by Communist party forces, introduced to Hungary when Stalin was in power within the USSR. Any discussion of women's changing situations needs to consider the way in which Soviet-styled Marxism-Leninism influenced attempts to introduce 'socialist' policies, but there is no wish in this work to carry on the jargon-laden debates that seem to have characterised much marxist writing concerning women. Obviously, any ideology is modified when put into practice. Marxism-Leninism was affected by Stalinism. The variety of Marxism-Leninism, and within that the policies concerning women, which were adopted in Hungary after 1948 have to be seen in this light. The input of Hungarian theorists, interpreting marxism (Lukács) and constructing humanist theories (Hegedüs *et al.*) was important.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION THROUGH 'SOCIALIST' DEVELOPMENT

At the outset it is important to consider what is meant by 'women's liberation'. In the sense in which it is used here, women's liberation is concerned with the abolition of oppression from which half of the adult population suffer because of their gender, because they are women. The term 'gender' is used here instead of 'sex' because the former takes into account all of the social phenomena which overlay the basic biological differences between men and women. Only women can give birth to and suckle children, yet all other child-care duties can be undertaken by either men or women. Such a division of labour by gender has not occurred 'naturally' but has been socially constructed and can thereby be changed by people's actions. This has nothing to do with biology but a great deal to do with what societies have come to expect of women. It is evident that throughout the world caring for children is mainly carried out by women and is seen as a 'woman's role'. The majority of domestic work – such as cooking, cleaning, shopping and general caring duties – is carried out by women. Yet in most 'socialist' states women were expected to engage in paid, public work. Indeed it was the very encouragement of women to become part of the public workforce that Engels viewed as one step on the way to liberating women from domestic slavery.

It is useful here to remember the distinction between liberal rights and socialist duties – in relation to productive labour. Whilst women in western Europe were struggling for the 'right to work', women in many of the central and eastern European countries were oppressed by their 'socialist' duty to work outside (and inside) their homes. Much of the debate currently being undertaken in central and eastern European countries is in terms of *choice*. That women will now have some choice over employment (*less* regarding unemployment) is a situation which will be new to many and future choices will be viewed within this context.

DOUBLE BURDEN

The socialisation of domestic work was envisaged by early marxists as another stage on the way to equalising relations between men

and women in society. Yet the contradictions of the so-called double burden from which women can suffer in all societies, and did suffer in 'socialist' societies where the majority of women were involved in paid work, are all too apparent. Much has been written about Engels's work on women and the family, both because this is one of the classic marxist documents on the family and because there has been a vulgarisation of Engels's work by many theorists (east and west), reducing his analysis to 'if women have *public paid* work then they become liberated'. The idea of liberation through paid work was but one aspect of the original marxist conception of human liberation. Engels has much more to say in terms of household work becoming privatised under capitalism, and in terms of women's position as 'slaves of the workers', each alienated from the other, etc. Yet it is clear in Marx's and Engels's work that the working class is the agency for human liberation. Liberation will be gained by workers' efforts to control the external world of work. There is no systematic study of the specific oppression of women. In his *Origin*,⁹ Engels gives an account of some aspects of the development of sexual and family relations under capitalism and he is clear in interpreting the hypocritical sexual relations under capitalism as containing adultery and prostitution within monogamous marriage. The vital point is made about 'the family' – as a changing entity. He is also clear on the essential preconditions for women's emancipation: women's participation in the workforce and the *socialisation of domestic work*. Women would leave the private sphere of domestic production and broaden their horizons through participation in public production. Engels gives each premise equal stress:

the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the whole female sex into public industry, and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished (Engels, 1976, p. 501).

This task could be begun under capitalism but would obviously proceed much more rapidly under 'socialism' as the costs involved in unifying the processes of domestic labour and commodity production could be spread throughout the whole society. Yet Marx's and Engels's thought is, of course, a product of its time and the discussion of women's emancipation in the abstract almost inevitably meant that the pressures working

against the socialisation of domestic work were underestimated. It is evident that Marx and Engels (and later Lenin) were concerned with the 'woman question' in so far as they wrote of the developments in society affecting women, changing their analysis when new information came to light, yet their analyses remain one-sided.

As their consideration of women's oppression is constructed within the general, theoretical emancipation of humankind through the transition to communism, the specificity of women's oppression is not fully realised. After all, as Sheila Rowbotham points out, despite their theoretical capacities, Marx and Engels were a couple of bourgeois men in the nineteenth century, so they 'were bound to see the women's situation through the eyes of men, and working-class women through the eyes of middle-class men. Inevitably this affected how they saw and where they looked' (Rowbotham, 1972, p. 62).

The importance of this is that in their analysis of the socialisation of housework and child-care tasks, the economic benefits of women's participation within the public sphere were overestimated, or rather the high costs (to men) of making available public utilities for meals, laundry and child-care were radically underestimated. As Heitlinger points out, Lenin only thought of the savings in labour time when housework would be socialised, but another outcome is that previously unpaid domestic work becomes waged work, thus requiring equivalent payment to other paid work, so that it becomes more expensive.¹⁰ So far as the division of labour within the home is concerned no mention is made of the need to equalise relations and responsibilities.

'SOCIALIST' FEMINISM

It is in this area that the arguments of some 'socialist feminists' are applicable. In a suitably broad definition of the aims of 'socialism', Christine Pelzer White states that:

socialism aims at transforming the world as it is presently structured by neocolonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, racism and sexism into a better world characterized by political self-determination by producers and equality between the sexes (Pelzer White, 1989, p. 172).

Within such a context the theoretical underpinnings of 'socialist feminist' thought on the female/male problematic can be assessed in terms of equalisation of work, renegotiation of acceptable/respected values, which have generally been regarded as a threat or an exaggerated emphasis on difference by most male 'socialist' thinkers. In this way, although some 'socialists' have argued that the 'woman question' has been answered at least in part, by 'socialism(s)' in various countries, socialist-feminists would argue that because women as a grouping had not consistently contributed to the theories of 'socialism', then current practices are lacking. Having 'women's issues' on the public agenda is not enough – so-called 'women's problems' are generally societal problems and need to be recognised as such. Something of this realisation is present within some of the new women's groups forming throughout central and eastern Europe. However, it is essential to point out that few women within these movements describe themselves as feminists, let alone socialist-feminists, as discussions have highlighted.¹¹ Debates on what the various political changes mean for women are important and varied, as will be seen later in considering of the choices and activities women are making towards new goals or towards a return to or retention of historical, gendered choices for women.

THEORISING WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

What are the consequences of the one-sided development of women's 'liberation' under 'socialism' for constructing a theory of women's oppression? Many aspects of Hungarian policy towards the 'emancipation' of women (never clearly defined in the official literature) appear to succumb to the vulgarisation of marxist theory in terms of women achieving full 'emancipation' through employment. In this context it is readily apparent that Hungarian men were not fully emancipated through public waged labour. There are contradictions here between the state policy in terms of women's public participation and the various kinds of encouragement aimed at increasing birth-rates. Policy-makers in 'socialist' states such as Hungary did not simply 'forget' the need for equal relations between men and women within the domestic sphere but actively proposed images of women as primarily mothers, child-carers and homemakers. Engels's im-

portant premise concerning the socialisation of domestic chores was used as a screen for ignoring those domestic relations which cannot be socialised – without revolutionising familial relationships – which was never a serious consideration in Hungary.

Here lies much of the confusing pressures which women face in terms of their 'social roles and responsibilities'. There are contradictions too concerning the reasoning behind, and outcomes of, certain social policy measures concerning the socialisation of child-care. As will be seen there is often a recourse in official rhetoric to women's 'natural' roles which is on a totally different level from that of the principles of historical materialism which analyse the causes of women's subordination in social and economic terms. As Molyneux points out this elevation of production above other areas of policy forms a barrier in terms of improving women's material situations and expanding consciousness of sexual inequality 'this "productivism" and the appeal to the general "needs" of society legitimises the reproduction of sexual divisions both in the workplace and in the home' (Molyneux, 1981, p. 13).

Yet the productivism and needs of 'socialist' societies do not require a *sexual* class division, only, it would appear, a class division along the lines of waged/unwaged labour. It will be seen that whilst in many areas over 80 per cent of Hungarian women participated in paid employment, this could not be considered as 'liberating' in any sense.

This shows the need for a more complex perspective from which to analyse women's oppression. Whereas Marx and Engels do not develop an agency for women (distinct from that of the working class) feminist theorists believe that women constitute the agents for changing their situation. This multifaceted debate includes various arguments concerning the nature of science/sociology/politics.¹² Feminist analyses separate knowledge from experience and offer critiques of social organisation. Such analyses are anti-élitist and reject a high culture which universalises white male heterosexism. In this study then, not only is the statistical evidence of women's employment given, along with the (male) orientation of the collection, but information on the ways in which such employment affects women's consciousness is given a central role. The historical development of Hungarian families demands consideration, as does the way in which most women experience the consequences of life within nuclear and other

familiar settings for different periods of their lives. Official values concerning 'good mothers/workers' deserve consideration alongside the 'guilt feelings' which many Hungarian women suffer about not being 'superwomen'. It is significant that the rates of mental illness in Hungary, as in many 'socialist' countries, are higher for women than for men.

Within this analysis, the nature of the so-called 'socialist family' is considered. In this context it can be seen that potentially the two most major exceptions so far as feminism is concerned are, first, that traditional marxists failed to analyse the ideology of domesticity which is involved in reproducing a particular form of family and the relations of male domination and female subordination, whilst, second, they critically presumed that the monogamous (heterosexual) family would disappear as women were drawn into social production.

FAMILIES AND EMPLOYMENT – IDEOLOGY

State ideologies in many countries work on the basis of an 'ideal' family in which live a man, a woman, two or – in some contexts – more children.¹³ That this 'ideal' family situation rarely exists in practice does not detract from its powerful influence – for policy-makers and in terms of people's everyday lives. In contemporary life the dilemma still exists for those who are widowed, separated, ill, unskilled, mothers of 'illegitimate' children and many others, of how they fit into this 'ideal type' of family, when they patently do not. Somehow, such people are expected to reconcile the very different ways of life and work and household management that they experience, with the increasingly dominant ideology. When this dominant ideology is questioned and some of the underlying assumptions that make it up are analysed, it becomes clearer just how much certain attitudes about such things as motherhood (e.g. maternal instinct, natural mothering, biological determination) are deeply imbued with it. In the analysis of families in the Hungarian context the differences between ideals and reality are explored and the ways in which familial groupings have changed, and are changing, over time.

Given the ups and downs of market-oriented (un)employment and a distinct lack of continuous, official encouragement to working women in some Western countries such as Britain, the

different context in Hungary regarding the processes whereby 'official' views feed back into women's consciousness – of their part in society and the ways in which they can achieve an harmonious, balanced and fulfilled life – is given detailed consideration. That there is much debate in Hungary in terms of what is 'natural', indicates an underlying tension in discussions on women's equality which has a political content, concerning the terms of those for and against full human equality. The very nature of what is meant by equality is important, in that most feminist theorists stress that within the present socio-political conditions this equality would necessarily be only partial as the terms on which it would be achieved would largely have been developed in a patriarchal framework of male institutions and male-oriented policies. When this dominating framework is broadened enough to be able to grasp the needs of women in their emancipation then the conditions will exist for women and men to work towards full human liberation on equal terms.

FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

Criticism of feminist analyses is often made in terms of their being visionary – not creating an analysis of the differences between women as a social entity, a driving force in history, and say, the working class as an agency for change. Certainly there is a visionary aspect to feminist analysis, one which many consider essential to any theory of liberation. In her consideration of the development of movements concerned with the liberation of women, Sheila Rowbotham has a vision of the future:

It is only when women start to organize in large numbers that we become a political force, and begin to move towards the possibility of a truly democratic society in which every human being can be brave, responsible, thinking and diligent in the struggle to live at once freely and unselfishly. Such a democracy would be communism, and is beyond our present imagining (Rowbotham, 1972, p. 12).

There are several points to be made in terms of this feminist vision, not least that, in common with other creative visions, there are several bodies of theory arguing for different ways of achieving liberation. It is important to remember that feminist

analysis is rooted in experience – the experience of being woman and this fundamental *common* experience underlies the creation of feminist work. This is not to suppose that merely by 'being' all women share common concerns, this is blatantly absurd given the differences for women in various cultures, across different herstories and in different situations of so-called 'development'. It does mean though, that such events as childbirth and child-caring have common aspects for women and as such can be discussed cross-culturally in terms of gains/losses (possibly due to certain policy measures) and lessons can be learned from changes in legislation, treatment, community care and action that have benefited women's situation (see Priya, 1992). Still, in this context it needs to be borne in mind that because 'woman' is a cultural (not a biological construct) then there are various cultural constructs of women. What feminists are working towards is the recognition of these different cultures within a woman-oriented perspective.

It is well to point out here that whilst feminist methodology is used within this work to give a critique of certain aspects of social policy and state intervention within Hungarian society, no 'prescriptions' from the Western experience are applied in the Hungarian context. At the outset of her study on feminist practice, Chris Weedon notes that:

Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the world of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become (Weedon, 1987, p. 1).

Weedon points out that the politics of feminism, which she is addressing, arise out of the Western Women's Movement, and as such are not directly applicable within different cultures. As will be seen, women's attitudes towards 'feminist politics' in Hungary show differing developments.

The difference for our purposes between the feminist emphasis and other emphases hinges on the stress given to women's experience *in their own account*. The considerations and comments made by women in Hungary to the author, are included here as equally important as other conceptions of 'how life is' drawn from academic researches. The intention is to avoid objectifying

women as a focus of study and to view and review women's own perceptions of their situation. Another point to note here is the 'interdisciplinary' nature of feminist analysis which rejects the male-oriented tendency towards compartmentalism. Arguments are developed through sociological and psychological conceptions, anthropological evidence, political analysis as well as with poems, songs and womenlore. In this context there are many examples of male-oriented perspectives within the various 'disciplines' – the use of the term sounds authoritarian in itself. Oakley gives several examples of this within sociology, such as the sociological literature on women's employment, which:

until quite late in the history of sociology, [women's employment] did not exist and when it did, focused almost entirely on the so-called 'social problem' of the employment of married women and the hazards this might pose to the satisfactory functioning of marriage as an institution and to the physical and psychological welfare of husbands and children (Oakley, 1976, p. 204).

Within her critique of sociology Oakley emphasises a central feature of feminist argument which restates the importance of the subjective experiences of women themselves. In writing about women from the male-oriented perspective women remain the objects of study and have no opportunity to take part in the study as subjects.

In this context extracts from discussions and interviews with the author are used in this work precisely to redress the imbalance often apparent in works which miss out the subject. Most of the discussions and interviews took place over a period of eight months in 1986 with many shorter visits from 1987 to 1992, in an environment in which there were exchanges between the author and the women who were sharing experiences, information and insights about their lives in Hungary. No enforced effort was made by the author to be detached and dispassionate and frequently questions were asked by each of us. Building up an atmosphere of trust in which open discussion of our everyday lives as women and all that this entails in terms of feelings and emotions connected with senses of self, hopes, fears, ambitions, expectations, romance, caring, the search for and/or assertion of identity, was essential to get beneath the surface impressions gained from questionnaires or formal interviews. This is not to

say there is no place for general surveys, questionnaires and structured interviews, all of which have been included within this work. There is a need to emphasise, as a vitally important ingredient, the *experience* of women themselves. In answer to questions concerning the objectivity and impartiality of knowledge, Jaggar notes that:

Women's subordinate status means that, unlike men, women do not have an interest in mystifying reality and so are likely to develop a clearer and more trustworthy understanding of the world. A representation of reality from the standpoint of women is more objective and unbiased than the prevailing representations that reflect the standpoint of men (Jaggar, 1983, p. 384).

In so saying Jaggar is not claiming that only the oppressed can realise and analyse the nature of their oppression, nor that women have a monopoly of understanding their situation. What Jaggar and other feminists do claim is that the experience of being woman means that women are free from some of the narrow and often defensive constraints which patriarchal socialisation places upon men.

Just as Engels's work on women's liberation has often been reduced in practice to 'liberation equals paid work for women' so there is a danger within the male-oriented perspective of attempting to reduce complex feminist analyses either to a form of women's rights within the male world or to vulgarise them by dismissing arguments as being female supremacist. In this context Rowbotham makes the point that:

Just as the abolition of class power would release people outside the working class, and thus requires their support and involvement, so the movement against hierarchy which is carried in feminism goes beyond the liberation of sex. It contains the possibility of equal relations not only between women and men, but also between men and men, women and women, and even between adults and children (Rowbotham, in Evans, 1982, p. 79).

Another strand of male-oriented criticism is in terms of feminist theories being merely 'Utopian'. This however, is practically and easily disproved by the variety of analyses which concentrate on how to change the 'here and now' problems which women face

daily in contemporary societies. It is exactly this combination of long- and short-term analysis and discussion of alternatives that gives the feminist contribution its strength. In terms of social policy, feminists include within their criticisms questions concerning the underlying assumptions about the family and the sexual division of labour which are generally implicitly included in welfare measures.

AIMS AND STRUCTURE

The primary aim is to look at the material conditions in which Hungarian women have gone, and go, about their everyday lives in the context of the interventionist measures designed to change certain aspects of their existence. In this context the state forces in Hungary are analysed over time, in terms of the way that policies are formulated, the direction to which planning was leading, as well as noting how welfare policies were administered and controlled, and whether or not barriers are evident in terms of the recipients of certain benefits/allowances. New sets of social relations were created in the moves towards 'socialism' and the extension and consolidation of these relations shaped new forms of power relations. Hungarian society was not developing into a 'socialist' society but became a distinctly Hungarian form of Kádárism, in which power and status were differentially accorded to officials within the regime. In order to 'get on' people had to make some compromise with the regime, in terms of either joining the Party or not opposing its ritualistic form of rule. Within these new social relations, well-being and status were primarily tied to political social relations, although within underground circles of course some status attached to active opposition to the regime. In time this statist 'socialism' became not only discredited but displaced and a political pluralist, market-oriented system is now being developed in Hungary. The ensuing changes within social relations are very much affecting women's lives and women in turn are effecting change within certain areas.

Obviously relations between state forces and societal elements play a major part in people's lives, and a major factor in the ways in which state forces affected women's lives under 'socialism' was the psychological element. In any transitional period, be that

Hungarian society from 1948, or from 1988, the development of new social relations is bound to be uneven, and to some extent limited – by existing attitudes or lack of money. One of the barriers to bettering women's situations in such transitional periods is that 'hangover' of former attitudes and beliefs, which to a large extent become internalised and so reproduced within the consciousness of succeeding generations. In this context the work of Irene Dölling is important in terms of considering the patriarchal paternalism which she argues was internalised by many women who experienced 'socialist emancipation' in various contexts within central and eastern Europe.

Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of life need to be changed in order for new social relations to emerge. In a highly industrialised late twentieth-century society such development entails social upheavals which are fraught with complications and are bound to necessitate a certain amount of rethinking along the way. As regards women's liberation, complex sets of relationships would need to undergo change – those between women and men in terms of rights/duties and expectations, between particular groups of women and certain state forces, mediation between specific ideologies and the realities of women's situations, between changes in family structures and state structures, and between women's domestic and public work – to note but a few. For 'socialist' societies, such as Hungary was viewed for 40 years, a framework within which women's position was seen as largely shaped by state policies and ideology, with state forces constructing ideology to some extent, was very destructive, not only for women's images of themselves and their opportunities, but for hindering the development of more progressive social expectations of women's strengths and future possibilities. State policies were constrained by changes in family structures caused by industrialisation and urbanisation, to a certain extent. The role of domestic (largely women's) labour in the economy, which in turn affects the position of women and each other is considered within the general framework of work – valued/undervalued, paid/unpaid – in both the 'socialist' and the so-called democratic context.

In Chapter 2, major social and political developments in Hungary since the 1940s are assessed together with some of the recent social changes following from the economic reforms of the late-1960s and the political developments since 1989. In Chapter

3 women's situation in connection with paid work is considered in order to gauge what women gained materially from 'socialist production' and how their domestic environments, considered in Chapter 4, are interlinked to their paid working situations. Generally the pivotal link between these two working contexts for women, are the activities involving families. Certain aspects of family theory are outlined to give background to some of the 'socialist' claims as well as to highlight some possible changes within the new political climate of liberal economics coupled with conservative socio-political attitudes.

In Chapter 5 the strengths and apparent weakness of certain social policy issues are considered. Much importance is attached to the debates surrounding the implementation of the child-care leave within Hungary. As this was one of the earliest instances of a much wider policy introducing payment for women to care for their children at home, its repercussions for women's lives was, and remains, important. Some of the stresses and strains faced by women in their various working lives are considered in Chapter 6, on health. Particular health needs of women in terms of child-bearing and child-caring are assessed against the background of health service crises. In the concluding section of this book attitudes towards femininity, sexuality, feminism, women's rights as well as those surrounding pornography, rape, prostitution and Hungary's most modern industry – the sex industry – are considered. What all this has meant for women who choose to organise in order to change certain patriarchal attitudes and to support actively campaigns for extending women's rights in various arenas is the subject of Chapter 8. In conclusion the questions raised throughout are reconsidered against the background of transitional changes, in terms of future possibilities for women within Hungarian society.