FRONT AND REAR: THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE ISRAELI ARMY

NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS

In recent years the role of women in the military has been widely debated. Although some feminists are opposed to women's participation in military activity of any kind, others favor the integration of women into the "male domain" of the armed forces. The largest feminist organization in the United States, the National Organization for Women (NOW), for example, argues that if men are drafted into military service, women should be as well. In NOW's view, women's equality means an equal share in both the "rights" and the "duties" of society.[1]

The issue is generally debated on a moral or philosophical level. This article explores it more concretely, by examining the historical experience of women in the Israeli army, the first army to recruit women by national law. The Israeli case suggests that the incorporation of women into the military may change the nature of, rather than eliminate, the subordination of women. Women's formal inclusion in the military does not guarantee their equality, either in terms of the actual tasks they fulfill or in terms of the power they exercise. On the contrary, as the Israeli case illustrates, the extremely hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the modern army can contribute to a gender differentiation and gender inequality even more institutionalized and extreme than in the civilian labor market.

Traditionally, the military has been considered an exclusively male domain. This was, however, never absolutely true. For example, in the siege of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, women helped pour boiling oil on the attacking Romans. Women were also part of the attacking army, accompanying the Roman battalions, not only to fulfill the sexual needs of the soldiers, but also to provide general servicing and maintenance for the army. Only since World

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War I, though, and then only in a temporary and marginal way, have women come to constitute a *formal* part of the military. Even today, there are very few countries in which women are regularly conscripted into the armed forces by law.

Yet women do constitute an integral part of most armies throughout the world, even if the exact extent of this participation is difficult to determine. For administrative or historical reasons, women performing identical jobs (such as clerical work or nursing) in different countries may be considered formally military personnel in one case and be seen as strictly civilian employees in another. But if women's work is important in all contemporary armies, in none—be it liberation army, national army, or professional army—are women represented to an extent approaching that of men. In most cases, women constitute no more than 5 to 7 percent of military personnel, often much less. Furthermore, in no army do women have *de facto* (and almost never *de jure*) equal access to military roles. There are almost always some military professions closed to women and some in which they are heavily concentrated. The allocation of military roles is, then, virtually always sexually ascriptive. This does not necessarily mean that all military professions are exclusively female or male, or that there is no fluctuation in the accessibility of certain jobs assigned to women and men. But it does mean that a vital aspect of each military role is its definition of openness to men and/or women.

FRONT AND REAR

The terms front and rear appear regularly in military discourse. This dichotomy reflects the actual continuum of geographical and functional areas involved in a military confrontation. At the front the territory under control of the fighting collectivity ends and the confrontation with the enemy takes place. At the rear most of the members of the collectivity stay in relative security defended by the fighters, who are prepared to die for the sake of the collectivity—to defend the lives of its members and its territory, or in some cases to expand and glorify it further. The rear, on the other hand, provides for all the needs of the fighters at the front.

Rear and front are not static structures. Once the front expands, the rear follows, and certain areas of the former front become part

of the new rear. The crucial point, though, is that certain functions of the rear, those of service and administration, are always part of the rear, while face-to-face fighting always takes place in the front.

Traditionally, the territorial front/rear and combatant/noncombatant dichotomies overlapped considerably. Although there were always people who fulfilled noncombatant roles at the front zone—essential medical, communication, and other services—most of the people at the front were engaged in actual fighting. Until relatively recently, no combat roles were actually possible away from the front, although combat-type activities in training and drilling often constituted a significant part of the military rear activities.

The development of modern warfare has drastically changed both the ratio of combatant-to-noncombatant military forces and the relationship between front and rear positions. It is estimated that approximately twenty noncombatant personnel are needed for every one combat role in a modern army. Many more auxiliary positions are required in such areas as technology, communications, and administration, in addition to the traditional service and maintenance tasks. At the same time, in a growing number of cases, physical proximity is no longer necessary in order to hit the enemy. The "functional" front, then, does not always overlap the "territorial" one, and the rear has often lost its relatively higher safety. The most consistent characteristic of the front surviving into the era of modern warfare is that it remains the place where fighting activities considered to be most important for the success of the military operation are located—even if they only involve pressing a button.

Women and men are not equally represented at the front and the rear. In most armies, even those including women, women are formally barred from the front zone and/or combatant roles (the functional front). The sexual division of labor in the military, as in society as a whole, is based on ongoing traditions concerning the "proper" areas of labor for females and males.

There is a nearly universal ideological tradition of sexual difference focusing on the image of men as fighters. In modern patriarchal society this tradition dictates that in the military, even more than in civilian life, men take up the heaviest and riskiest jobs. Women, on the other hand, are expected both to reproduce future "manpower" in their capacity as mothers and to serve the men, raise their morale, and—when front demands expand—per-

form the tasks men cannot fulfill.

The dynamic nature of the front/rear division means that the roles of women in the military are determined by the extent to which the men are needed at the front. In other words, it may not be the specific military task that determines it as a "woman's job" in the army, but rather its relation to the demands of the front and to the pressure on "manpower" resources. Women's engagement in occupational roles formerly filled only by men does not necessarily mean, then, a weakening in the sexual division of labor. It often represents simply an expansion of the military and/or economic front with women "filling in" for men – a situation easily reversed when the front regresses. As long as nondifferential gender roles are a product of emergencies, such as revolution or war, the sexual division of labor will reassert itself along traditional lines once the crisis has passed.

I propose the front/rear model as a convenient framework to describe the shifting sexual division of labor, not only because of its dynamic nature, but also because it focuses attention on how national ideologies and mobilizations, mediated by states or political movements, can affect the sexual division of labor. This is true despite the fact that these national ideologies often focus on the perceived necessary role of men, rather than of women.

I do not contend that even within the military the front/rear dynamic is the only dynamic of the sexual division of labor. Moreover, in each concrete historical situation, there is no unitary category of "woman" and "man" in the labor market; ethnicity, class, age, or place in the life cycle all affect the specific position of various categories of women and men in the military, as in the civilian labor market. Political and economic forces, from the feminist movement to the multinationals, can affect the front/rear dynamic as well.

These issues, however, cannot be discussed only in the abstract. Let us turn now to the case of the Israeli military and explore the dynamics of the sexual division of labor in its pre-state and post-state history.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ISRAELI CASE

Cynthia Enloe[2] remarks that the integration of women into the army is usually defined as part of the *national* security policy, while in reality it is an expression of the *state* security policy. This is an important differentiation in every case, but especially in the case of Israel, where women's participation in the military started in the pre-state period and continued after the state was established. Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, recruiting initially only Jewish people, including women, to its military. Many of its citizens, however, and even more of those under its control, are not part of the Jewish national collectivity.

The establishment of the state brought significant changes to the nature of women's participation in the Israeli military. The changes related mainly to two aspects of the transformation from the pre-state to the state military. First, until the establishment of the state, women's (and men's) participation in the military was a result of a voluntary act (at least formally) by the person and involved only certain sectors of the population. Since the establishment of the state, joining the army (except the small professional army) is done on a basis of a national recruitment act rather than on a volunteer basis. Thus, the military state policy has had to relate to all sectors of the state population, although not necessarily in the same way. Second, in the pre-state period there was ambivalence, inconsistency, and vagueness in relation to the nature of women's participation in the military, and in many cases, it was a result of ad hoc decisions rather than a planned policy. In addition there were at least three opposing ideologies, represented by the *Palmach,* Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS)[3], and the religious sectors, concerning the desired nature of women's participation. These ideologies could continue to coexist as parallel and separate *ideologies* after the establishment of the state, but a coherent, unified (although not necessarily homogeneous) state *policy* had to be crystalized.

The historical overview I shall present does not presume to be detailed or complete.[4] I shall concentrate only on struggles and occasions that are significant to debates and decisions that had to be taken in relation to sexual divisions in the military. The period discussed covers the first half of the twentieth century, from the beginning of the Zionist settlement in Palestine until the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

There was almost always a trickle of Jewish religious immigrants to Palestine, but the Zionist immigration, which started in 1882 with the first *Aliya* (wave of immigration) from Russia, was the first to conceive of immigration to Palestine as an act of a national movement. Almost from the beginning of the Zionist settlement, especially from the second *Aliya*, which was the first to use socialist slogans and give Zionist colonization its special character, the confrontation with the native Palestinians began. The Zionists wanted to establish a Jewish society and state in Palestine. Many among them, especially the Labor Zionists who won the leadership of the Zionist movement in the 1930s, used socialist ideologies and concepts – to which they had become exposed in Eastern Europe at the beginning of the century – as a major instrument to promote what they saw as the Jewish national liberation movement and the creation of the New Jew. As a result, the strategy of the Zionist movement was different from other colonialist movements. Zionism wanted to exclude the native Palestinians from the new society they were creating – in other words, to dispossess rather than exploit them. Therefore, the three main slogans that directed the Zionist activities vis-à-vis the Palestinians were "conquering the land," "conquering the labor market," and "conquering the production market."

This strategy had two results that affected the involvement of women in the military. First, almost from the beginning the strategy created confrontations with the Palestinians, who resented the new phenomenon, and with time and the development of the Zionist settlement, felt more and more threatened. The Palestinians attempted in various ways to struggle against the "invaders." This confrontation started on local levels, in places where the Zionist settlers moved to lands which they had bought from absentee landlords, but where local settlements had traditionally existed. The resistance gradually grew to a national movement: on a Palestinian level, it reached its peak in the "rebellion" of 1936-39, and on a national Arab scale, in the war of 1948, with the invasion by Arab armies into Palestine, which occurred after the United Nations confirmed the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state, and continued thereafter. This meant that all through the history of the Zionist settlement and the state of Israel, military preoccupation had a central place in the life of the settlers. In this sense, Israeli society was from the outset a "war society," creating

constant pressure to recruit a loyal and trained work force to help with the military effort. The second result of this "socialist strategy" of colonization was that women were considered (ideologically, although not practically) to be equal members of the new society. From the beginning, this ideology enabled women to be potentially part of the human power pool, which would be used to meet the needs of the military.

The pressure for the participation of women in the struggle grew when the Zionist *Yishuv* (the organized Jewish population in Palestine in the pre-state period) started to confront not only the local Palestinian population, but also the British Mandate that ruled the country after the previous ruler, the Ottoman Empire, was defeated at the end of World War I. As a result of the growing pressure of the Palestinian national movement, the British changed its policy of primary support for the "Jewish National Home" in Palestine and attempted to limit Jewish immigration to Palestine. This change in policy coincided with the rise of the Nazi movement in Europe, and the Holocaust of World War II, when the pressure for Jewish immigration of refugees to Palestine became very strong. (This pressure was also due to the growing limitations on Jewish immigration to other countries, such as the United States, where Jews used to emigrate before the war.) The demands for the immediate establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine grew correspondingly, and the pressure grew on the work force pool of the *Yishuv* to become involved in all the military struggles – against the Arabs, against the British, and against the Nazis in World War II. Jewish women participated in all these struggles.

Until the end of the 1930s, the military activities of the Zionist settlers had occured on a part-time basis in the local settlements. Exceptional in this regard were the *Hashomer*, full-time guards who were hired to defend Jewish settlements in the earliest period. Women also participated in this organization, whose members adopted a romantic version of Bedouin garments and lifestyle. However, the women's participation was mostly passive, as guards' wives, and only a few were allowed to fight with the men.[5]

The *Hagana,* the Defense Organization, grew to be the central military organization of the *Yishuv*.[6] It started in the 1920s and 1930s in a decentralized way in the locality and became a national centralized organization at the time of the Arab Rebellion, in the years 1936-39. Women took part in the guard shifts of the *Hagana,*

although to a lesser extent than the men – for they had to take shifts in the children's homes as well. Women learned to use and care for guns, but were usually concentrated in signaling and first aid jobs. Once the military strategy of the *Hagana* changed, from defending the settlement from attacks to attacking the enemy away from the settlement, women remained behind to guard the settlement and the children. The men, on the other hand, went to the "front," which may have been only a few miles away, in settlement fields.

The elite units of the *Hagana* in its later period were the commando battalions, the *Palmach.* These were full-time military units, basically organized on an informal egalitarian basis, recruited from young Kibbutz members and youth movement graduates. In the early days of the *Palmach* an explicit prohibition on women's participation existed, which changed when a local commander recruited a group of women. After considerable debate and struggle, women's participation was legitimated in May 1942, although formally limited to a fixed quota (which was not always respected when personnel needs grew) of 10 percent of the membership.[7]

Initially the women were distributed among the various existing units and underwent training identical to that of the men. However, this practice created tensions and difficulties, and the women found that they had to prove themselves stronger than the men and that they were still under a lot of social pressure. In September 1943, the first convention of *Palmach* women passed a resolution calling for the training of women to be carried out in separate units, including separate commanders' courses. It was also decided at this time that specializations in signaling; first aid; driving; patrolling; and all administrative, social, and cultural functions would be emphasized in the training of women. These decisions meant that women in the *Palmach* continued to go out to the front with the men, but their role in the battle was clearly defined as noncombatant and auxiliary to the men. The decisions also meant a realization on the part of the *Palmach* women that, given the general ideologies and practices of gender relations, identical formal military roles did not in themselves bring about the equality of women's and men's position.

Women participated not only in the *Hagana* and *Palmach,* but also in the smaller "dissenting organizations" *(Ezel* and *Lehi),*[8] which

had a policy of a much stronger military confrontation with the Palestinians and the British, and specialized in terrorist and sabotage actions. The fact that these organizations (especially *Ezel*) were not socialist and their membership came mainly from the cities and from oriental and strongly religious families meant that their attitudes toward women were more "chivalric" and conservative. On the other hand, their needs for personnel were much greater, so that in practice their policies toward women were quite similar to those of the *Hagana*. Women did participate from time to time in "front-type" sabotage activities, but again mostly filled auxiliary roles in first aid, guarding, transfer of arms, and so forth.[9]

The women from the *Yishuv* who volunteered (despite the ambivalence of the *Yishuv*) to join the British Army during World War II and served in the units of ATS and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force Service (WAAFS),[10] had a totally different experience of the military. The women's volunteering act was consistent with the policy of the *Yishuv* during the war against the Nazis, which was summed up by David Ben-Gurion: "We shall fight the war as if there is no White paper, and shall fight the White paper as if there is no war."

The 4,000 women who volunteered in the British army served mainly in the ATS (900 served in the WAAFS). It was the first time that women from the *Yishuv* had served in a regular army, and the ATS became to a great extent the model on which women's role in *Zahal* (the Israeli army) was later shaped. Unlike the *Hagana* and *Palmach,* the roles of women in ATS were clearly defined, organizationally and functionally. They were separated from the men and organized in units of fifty to sixty women living in special quarters on large army bases. The ATS women from the *Yishuv* were kept clearly away from combat roles as well as from the front. They worked in offices, stores, hospitals, communications, as drivers, and so forth. As auxiliary forces, they were also partly prohibited from taking on jobs open to British women; for example, they could not participate as registered nurses or doctors, or, for a time, as ambulance drivers (even though they were driving three-ton trucks). (Some British women even operated as anti-air gunners, a combatant role, but in the rear.)

In one episode, *Yishuv* female participation in the war was very small numerically, but highly significant symbolically: a special unit of the *Palmach*, composed of twenty-five men and three

women, participated in a secret mission for the British and parachuted behind the enemy lines in Europe to help in the escape of British captives and Jewish refugees from conquered Europe.[11] Two of the women (Hannah Senesh and Haviva Reich) and seven men were caught, tortured, and executed. The memory of their heroism became a symbol both of national sacrifice and of the egalitarian heroic nature of the participation in the war of women from the *Yishuv*.

The 1948 War, which was the reaction of the Arab world to Israel's declaration of independence, marks the transformation period from the *Yishuv* to statehood. One facet of this transformation that changed women's role was the conversion of the *Hagana* and the dissenting organizations into a regular army. The first stage of the war, lasting about six months, concentrated mainly on controlling the roads, which were crucial for transferring supplies and forces to different settlements. During this stage women's participation was the most active. In many cases, they did not stay in the bases or outposts, but fought with the men, partly in combat roles – as snipers, as soldiers accompanying convoys, and so forth – but mostly in auxiliary roles such as signalers and nurses. Women in combat were perceived ambivalently.[12] On the one hand they were under constant pressure to prove themselves as good and as tough as the men; on the other hand, even when it was admitted (as was very often the case) that the women were as good, the male soldiers and commanders worried that they would be captured and raped by the enemy.

At a later stage of the war, the army ceased to be voluntary and became a regular, standing army, recruited nationally. As the expansion of the military proceeded and the balance of power changed in favor of Israel, the differentiation between the roles of women and men grew wider. Instructions were given by headquarters to take women away from the front line[13] (which still did not mean complete safety because of the small size of the country, but did decrease the chance of the women being captured alive by the enemy). The roles of women in the bases and outposts were basically administrative, secretarial, culinary, cultural, and educational. In the latter role, they taught Hebrew to the new immigrants who had volunteered from abroad to join the fighting forces. They also helped with the basic military and professional

training of other female soldiers. The final crystalization of the army took place once the war was over.

ZAHAL (ISRAEL DEFENSE ARMY)

"*Zahal* is the army of Israel to which the guardianship of its sovereignty and security is commanded. It also fulfills an important role in absorption of immigration, integration of various ethnic groups, education of national consciousness and learning."[14] This definition in the *Lexicon of the Security of Israel* sums up the model of the army which Ben-Gurion created as the primary instrument of his statist strategy. It expresses the intimate links in Israel between the national collectivity, the army, and the state. It also reflects the resulting model of the army that emerged from the debate about what *Zahal* should be. The dominant orientations in the debate were the professional one based on experience in the British army, on the one hand, and the nationalist-voluntaristic orientation based on the *Hagana* and *Palmach* traditions, on the other hand.

Zahal was formally established on May 31, 1948, and is basically composed of two frameworks: The first is the regular army composed of (1) a small professional core in leading roles and (2) a nationally recruited army composed of all the Jewish citizens of the state (and some members of the minorities – mainly Druze and Bedouin men) who are in the recruitment age groups (women *and* men). The second framework is a reserve army consisting of all men under the age of fifty and some single women in their twenties, who served in the regular army. They are called to serve a minimum of one month per year. (Service in some elite units is voluntary.)

Zahal has three main branches – the land, sea, and air corps – under one integrated headquarters of professional, geographical, and goal-oriented command units. According to Shif and Haber its structure and basic strategy is to keep maximum mobility, to transfer the war to the enemy territory, and to develop the preemptive strike.[15] This is based on the evaluation that Israel will always be quantitatively inferior, of small strategic importance, and surrounded by enemy countries.

After the 1967 war, the territory that *Zahal* guarded almost

doubled. This, and the fact that the mass immigration to Israel had virtually ended, changed the emphasis in the work of the army, especially in the post-1973 war period, to a more professional one. The basic structure and goals of the army, however, as the most universal body in which its citizens participate during a significant period of their lives, did not change, although the Lebanon War, as the first war in the history of Israel without a wide national consensus, has affected it informally.

CHEN (CHARM): WOMEN CORPS

Chen is defined as one of the goal-oriented command units of *Zahal.*[16] As in the case of the general structure and character of *Zahal,* it emerged from the debate between those who wanted to adopt the model of the British army and those who wanted to adopt the model of the *Hagana-Palmach.* One of the basic disagreements concerned the extent to which women should be kept in separate corps, as in the British army, or in mixed ones, as in the *Hagana-Palmach.* The solution that was adopted was some kind of compromise. It is not coincidental, however, that from the establishment of *Chen* in 1948 until 1970 all the commanding officers were ex-ATS officers. The name of the command unit was also a result of a compromise. First it was suggested that it should be called Auxiliary Women Corps (Che'e'n), but Women Corps was finally adopted, both because its initials in Hebrew (Chen) meant "charm" (a feminine characteristic emphasized in the corps) and because it has more egalitarian connotations.

All the women in *Zahal* formally belong to *Chen,* but their membership in the corps is more partial than the membership of the men to their units. This is because most of the women in the army are under the day-to-day authority of male officers from the other units. They are sent to perform their various jobs in the army, not as a result of the decision of *Chen,* but as a result of personnel decisions made by General Headquarters and the different command units, which are all staffed by men. The senior officers of *Chen* only have advisory capacities in General Headquarters and in the different branches and command units of the army. As Shif and Haber sum up the situation: "The synthesis was crystallized [in the fifties] between senior officers [in *Chen*] as consultants, and junior officers as commanders."[17]

The commanding power of the junior officers of *Chen* relates to the two areas exclusively under *Chen* authority – basic training and juridical authority. Every woman who is recruited to the army undergoes a course of basic training, which usually takes about three weeks. In this course she is trained in physical fitness and use of personal arms, given lectures on various topics from Zionism to cosmetics, and most of all is adjusted to military discipline. Exclusive juridical authority over the women soldiers rests with *Chen* officers, who alone can judge women accused of any military offense (although most complaints come from the males under whom they are working). In addition, *Chen* officers on large army bases are usually responsible for the separate living quarters of the women soldiers (women in *Zahal* are not allowed to live in places where separate showers and minimal facilities are not available) and for the guard duties of female soldiers.

The length of service of women in *Zahal* has usually been eighteen to twenty-four months, which is four months to a year shorter than that of the men. The women are then obliged to serve in the reserve army until they become pregnant, get married, or reach the age of twenty-four (previously, twenty-six); in specific desirable professional roles they might be called by law until the age of thirty-four. In various periods, though, this reserve status was only nominal unless the women had a specifically necessary military skill. Some women do continue to serve in the professional army, but they constitute less than 10 percent of its composition and are usually concentrated in the lower ranks.[18] The salaries of female soldiers are identical to those of men at the same rank, as are their welfare benefits (although until a few years ago welfare benefits tended to discriminate in favor of male soldiers).

THE MILITARY ROLES OF WOMEN IN *ZAHAL*

The military goal of women in *Zahal,* according to a 1973 government publication, includes

> strengthening the fighting force by fulfilling administrative, professional and auxiliary roles, in order to release male soldiers to combat roles; training women to defend themselves and their homes and integrating them in the security effort of Israel, even after the termination of their active military service. The female soldiers also help in the educational activity of *Zahal* – in the educational system as teachers, and in *Zahal* as a whole, in the areas of crystallizing the morale of the units and taking care of the soldiers of the units.[19]

Out of 850 military professions recognized by *Zahal* in 1980, women were engaged in only 270.[20] (Data from 1977-78 show about 790 professions open for men and 210 for women.)[21] About 50 percent of the professions open to women were clerical, a percentage more or less identical to the combat roles closed to women. According to Ann Bloom, the actual percentage of women soldiers who were engaged in clerical occupations was 65 percent; the other 35 percent were engaged in technical, mechanical, and operational duties.[22] (Shuly Eshel, though, claims that the percentage of women in the first category is even higher.)[23]

The exact professions in which women are engaged in the army are not static; they change according to *Zahal*'s personnel needs. The 1952 law concerning the roles of women in the regular army lists twenty-five such roles, but also declares that a woman can fulfill any other military role if she agrees to do so in writing.

In actuality, as Shif and Haber mention, there are several occupations from which women have been excluded over the years: hand grenade throwing, heavy artillery, and driving (the latter occupation was renewed in the 1970s). A significant number of the 35 percent not engaged in clerical work were engaged in welfare duties and teaching Hebrew, basic literacy, and arithmetic. The recipients of the educational services of teachers in the army were either new immigrants or soldiers who came from the most socially deprived Jewish social strata in Israel. As will be discussed later, women who lack these skills are not usually recruited to the army. In addition to serving in the army, women are assigned to other nationally important roles outside the army. Women soldiers are employed as teachers in development towns and villages; work in Kibbutzim and other border settlements; and, in the 1970s, were brought in to strengthen the police, especially the border police, in special units.

A major category of women's work in the army, as in the civilian labor market, is that of office work. In office work, women are found in positions that are, in principle, inferior to those of men – from the "mere consultative" character of the few senior women officers, to the common private, or even sergeant, secretaries who are under the authority of their (mostly male) bosses. This type of office work usually expands beyond the duties of typing, filing, or telephoning. As late as February 1981, the military attorney issued a judgment that coffee making and floor washing cannot be con-

strued as outside the legitimate duties of military secretaries.[25] The power relations between the boss and his clerk create patterns of relationships that are often translated into the domain of sexual relationships (again, not unlike civilian life). Here, however, in addition to the common imbalance of power between a boss and a secretary the boss in this case has the added power of his military authority. It is true that women can be judged only before *Chen* officers – who sometimes can be used as a brake on the boss's power – but the complaints about the soldier and/or her disregard of military regulations come from the boss, and unlike in the civilian market, resignations are not accepted.

Another aspect of the work of women soldiers in the offices of the different units is reflected in the name of the women's corps – Charm. The subject of explicit sexual relations between women and men in the Israeli military is *formally* ignored,[26] except when a soldier becomes pregnant and it becomes known to the military authorities. In this case, her service used to be hastily terminated, but now she is allowed two free abortions first. *Zahal* officially *encourages,* however, implicit sexual relationships. A central demand from the women in the army is that they "raise the morale" of the male soldiers and make the army "a home away from home." During the basic training of the women they are coached to emphasize their "feminine" characteristics and their neat appearance, receiving guidance in cosmetic application. In the words of the *Zahal* spokesman: "*Chen* adds to *Zahal* the grace and charm which makes it also a medium for humanitarian and social activities."[27]

The emphasis on the "feminine" essence of women soldiers places them in a subordinate position to that of men; that is, the women are there for the sake of the men, to make them happier and to humanize military service. However, the women gain some measure of power, particularly when they fulfill jobs in the education and welfare areas, in which femininity is basically an extrapolation of the feminine mother role, and not that of the wife or mistress. This power, however, usually has a class bias. The clients of those women soldiers working as teachers and welfare officers are usually men from a lower-class level than the women (although in offices very often the men and women come from the same class background.)

The pressure on personnel resources in *Zahal* grew substantially in the 1970s. In 1976 a policy was created to widen the range of oc-

cupations for women in the army. According to reports in the papers and statements from the government committee on the position of women in Israel, the new openings have been mainly in two areas: (1) military occupations defined as combat but filled by women in noncombat conditions (such as learning to drive tanks in order to train male tank drivers and release experienced male tank drivers for jobs at the front); (2) maintenance and electrical positions related to the new technology involved in sophisticated armaments. Here, as in parallel developments in the civilian market (which in Israel are largely related also to the "security industry"), there are new openings for women; for example, in the ammunition and air force command units.

These new roles opening to women have created problems concerning the length of service for women in the regular army. This is a "catch-22" situation: the relatively unskilled character of women's roles enables the army to release them earlier than the men, yet the short length of their service becomes an obstacle in allocating them to professional jobs which involve a long period of training. The ad hoc solution was that women agreeing to be involved in these types of occupations have to commit themselves to serve one additional year in the professional army after their regular military service is over. In addition, the army attempted to develop, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, pre-army training courses, which would enable the army to use their women graduates in relevant professional jobs and allow the women to work in parallel occupations in industry after their release. Some of the women involved in the courses have been women whom the army would not otherwise have recruited for "qualitative" educational reasons. It is important to emphasize that the new, higher-status openings for women in the army are negligible in percentage terms, compared with the women who occupy routine female military jobs. However, if developed, this type of labor carried out by women may change the character of female participation in the army. For the first time, women are occupying professional jobs that require longer training periods. This new occupational status might affect not only the length of women's service, but also their dispensability in times of emergency at the front.

The sexual ascriptiveness of the division of labor in *Zahal* does not necessarily mean that all the military professions are deter-

mined exclusively as either female or male. Over the years, the range of specific jobs women (and men) occupied in the army changed with the acquisition of new kinds of military techniques and changes in other facets of military service. At the same time, there was a corresponding change in the relative degree of overlap between female and male roles. The crucial factor that determines the sexual ascriptive nature of the military is that each task at each point in time is defined as open either to men and/or women as a vital characteristic of the job description. In spite of progress regarding the roles open to women and men in the army, the ascriptive sexual division is not random and is directly related to the division between front and rear.

Since the 1948 War, women have not been allowed to remain in the front once an emergency is declared and the front actually starts to function as such. The authorities emphasized that the three women soldiers who were killed during the 1973 War met their deaths by remaining illegally at the front and disobeying explicit orders and no women soldiers died among the hundreds who died in the Lebanon War. Even in the report of the government committee on the position of women in Israel, which aspires to egalitarianism, the recommendation is to open all the jobs, with the exception of combat positions at the front, to women.

The demand for workers during the last few years has allowed more participation in combat jobs, but this has not diminished the basic principle of the front/rear sexual division of labor in the army. (This does not mean that a large portion of the male soldiers in *Zahal* do not fulfill rear functions as well; rear activities, especially in peace times occupy most positions in the army. What it does mean is that female soldiers are excluded from the front.)

The sexual division of labor in the Israeli military bears some similarity to that in the civilian sector. Although the civilian labor market is less rigid than that of the military, 54.8 percent of women participating in the civilian labor markets are engaged in clerical and administrative jobs, and 52.3 percent of them are engaged in public and community service areas. Similarly, women have started to enter significantly into the areas of the new mechanical and electronic industry, but again, this process is only in its beginning.[28] In Israel, the movement of Jewish women into this branch of industry may also be accelerated due to another factor. In other branches of industry, Palestinian men could replace

labor branches in which Jewish men were no longer interested (construction, for example), and Palestinian women could work in others (garment making, for example). However, in Israel, an overwhelming major part of the electronic industry is connected to the security and armaments industry, which has developed into one of the major export branches of Israeli industry. For this reason, Palestinian women and men are not considered a suitable "rear" source of personnel in this context; only Jewish women, it is thought, can be trusted.

The exclusion of Palestinians from "security" positions in the civilian labor market and from all military positions, raises the question of the relationship between sexual divisions in the Israeli military and divisions in Israeli society as a whole. We can explore this relationship by finding out not only which positions are filled by women rather than men in the army, but also which *categories* of Israeli women fulfill these roles and which categories of women are excluded or are not properly represented.

CATEGORIES OF WOMEN

As with many other seemingly universal laws, the national security service law that recruits Israeli women and men into the army is misleading. The law of 1969 states that every Israeli citizen or permanent resident has to enter the regular army, men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine and women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, unless they are physicians or dentists, in which case they can be called up until the age of thirty-eight. Nevertheless, in 1976-77,[29] only 51.5 percent of Jewish women (and none of the non-Jewish women) in that age group were recruited, and it seems that the percentage has been even smaller since that time, after legal changes in the procedure for releasing religious women from the service were instituted by the Begin government. The 48.5 percent who were not called to serve in the army include 2 percent released for medical reasons; 0.5 percent released for administrative reasons; 18.5 percent released for religious and conscientious objection; 8 percent married before recruitment age; 0.5 percent deceased, or otherwise unavailable; 19 percent unsuitable for personality reasons or lack of education. The proportion of women who are Israeli citizens or permanent residents who do not serve in the army is even higher if we

remember that no non-Jewish women (who constitute about 15 percent of the female population in Israel proper within the pre-1967 borders) are called to serve in the army. Most non-Jewish male citizens do not serve in the army either; the few exceptions are those who are members of smaller ethnic minorities with a history of persecution by other Palestinians and those considered loyal to the Zionist state. The women of the Druze or the Bedouins are kept out of the army not because they are thought to be security risks but because, first, they come from conservative religious backgrounds where it is believed women should continue to live at home until they marry; and second, because the army is not interested in female soldiers under a certain educational level, therefore excluding the overwhelming majority of these women.

Similarly, within the Jewish population approximately two-fifths of women who are left out of "universal" recruitment of women to the army come from conservative religious homes and have insufficient education. The majority of these come from families who did not normally participate in the military forces of the *Yishuv*, when it was basically voluntary. Those who participated were mostly secular, of *Ashkenazi* (Western or Occidental) origin, and had a minimum of secondary school education. Jewish men who are not recruited into the army come from the same social backgrounds, but the percentage of those not recruited overall comes to less than 10 percent among the men.

A large category of women released from serving in the army are those who the army decides are "qualitatively" unsuitable. A knowledge of Hebrew, a minimum level of education, and a certain level of performance in psychotechnic tests are required by the army which also rejects those women with criminal records. The release of soldiers on qualitative grounds is much higher among women than men.[30] One-fifth of those women who are recruited are classified as "officer" quality, in contrast to only one-tenth of male recruits.

This differentiation in the class origin of women and men in the Israeli military strengthens a tendency found in most labor markets, including Israel, in which the class positions of men in the labor market are much more heterogenous than those of women who are mostly concentrated in the lower-middle-class positions.[31] This distribution strengthens my earlier observation that, although in general women are subordinate in the military,

their power relations are very different vis-à-vis *Ashkenazi* middle-class men (of similar origin to the majority of women who serve in the army) and vis-à-vis *Sephardi* (or Oriental) working-class men (who are often their "clients" as pupils or welfare cases).

The other two major categories of women who do not serve in the Israeli army come to a large extent from class and ethnic backgrounds similar to those of the "unqualified" ones. Israeli law does not recognize "conscientious objection" as legitimate grounds for men to be released from serving in the army. Those very few principled pacifists who have persisted have usually been taken to prison for a while, and then released, mostly on "psychiatric" grounds. Extremely religious men have their service in the army postponed as long as they study in *Yeshivas* (high religious educational institutes) and often end up not serving in the army at all. In contrast, women are legally recognized in the security service law as eligible for release from service for "religious and conscientious reasons." To be released they had to appear before a committee and bring two witnesses to prove that they were religious (that is, did not travel on the Sabbath, ate only *kosher* food, and so forth). In the coalition agreement in 1977, which was later passed as an amendment to the security service law, it was agreed that a "genuine declaration" of "religiosity" would suffice, and the confirmation of a committee was no longer needed. (This step evoked a great deal of public opposition, especially among secular women, who were afraid that their burden, especially in the reserve service, would be greater.) The release of women on religious grounds is not because they might be unable to fulfill their religious duties in the army – all army food is *kosher*, and, except in emergencies, soldiers do not travel on the Sabbath (there are many religious male soldiers). The release of women on these grounds was a concession to the religious parties who had objected initially to any women in the army, for fear of their "moral corruption." Women released from service were originally supposed to work in alternative civil service, but the law was never enforced and only a negligible number volunteer to do so, mainly in hospitals.

The third category of women released from regular military service are those who have already started to fulfill their reproductive role: married women, pregnant women, or women with children are released even if they are in the middle of their service, and they are not called into the reserve army. Only women in the

small professional army are allowed to serve when they have families.

The high percentage of women who are excluded for one reason or another from the military has direct implications for their involvement in the intensive process of social and national integration that takes place in *Zahal*. Constant military confrontation and the relatively small size of the Israeli-Jewish nation created a need for maximum mobility of the people in and out of the army, under the slogan: "There is no alternative." This meant creating a strong symbolic identification between the people and the state, with the army as a major mediating mechanism for solidifying "national consensus." Although this close relationship was "purest" in the *Yishuv* period when the voluntary character of the military was greatest, it continues in *Zahal* despite the class and ethnic distinctions reflected within the internal stratification of the army. *Zahal* has been investing a lot of resources in educating and acculturating its men, including the men who come from the social stratum from which most of the women who are not serving in the army come, that is, (apart from a small, extremely religious *Askenazi* sector) from Oriental "Second Israel."

The exclusion of women from this national integration process, however, applies not only to the women who never serve in the Israeli military. Almost *no* Israeli Jewish women (apart from the few who serve in the professional army) serve in the army after their early twenties, although Israeli men serve at least one month a year until they are fifty years old. Israeli Jewish national cohesiveness is, then, a major product of the patriarchal male bond of the military. Correlatively, the role of Israeli men as soldiers is their most important national role and has a highly symbolic as well as practical significance. (Only in this context can we understand the far-reaching implications that the growing draft resistance movement in the Israeli army around the Lebanon War has had on Israeli society.)

The most important national role of Israeli Jewish women also relates to the army—namely, their role as reproducers. It used to be common in Israel (before the national mood changed in the 1980s) to say to a pregnant woman, "Congratulations! I see you are soon going to bring a small soldier into the world!" Motherhood—and of boys in particular—is definitely a military role, and the most important national role of Israeli Jewish women.[32] As

Geula Cohen, a member of the Knesset and ex-member of *Lehi*, put it: "The Israeli woman is an organic part of the family of Jewish people and the female constitutes a practical symbol of that. But she is a wife and a mother in Israel, and therefore it is of her nature to be a soldier, a wife of a soldier, a sister of a soldier, a grandmother of a soldier – this is her reserve service. She is continually in military service."[33] Similarly, Ben-Gurion expressed the hegemonic ideology in Israel concerning woman's military role:

> Now for the question of women in the army. When one discusses the position of women, two factors must be taken into consideration. First, women have a special mission as mothers. There is no greater mission in life, and nature decreed that only a woman can give birth to a child. This is woman's task and her blessing. However, a second factor must be remembered: the woman is not only a woman, but a personality in her own right in the same way as a man. As such, she should enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as the man, except where motherhood is concerned.[34]

Women, therefore, can participate as "honorary" men in the army, until they start (and some strata of women are encouraged, by being excluded from the army, to start even earlier) to be mothers.

It is not accidental that the attitude of the state of Israel to widows, parents, and orphans of war is very different from that of most other states. Israeli society perceives in their loss an active national contribution on their part, which they give in their own right. The state, owing them a debt of honor, attempts to reward them through the Ministry of Security, by attempting to replace their dead relative, symbolically and practically. The war widow accepts a salary from the state and other privileges that bear no relation to the income of her husband before death (like other widows), but to those of a senior government officer.[35]

During the Lebanon War, however, for the first time "human sacrifice" was not accepted as a legitimate, if heartbreaking, aspect of membership in the Israeli-Jewish national collectivity. One of the reasons, it is rumored, for Menahem Begin's nervous breakdown was the impact of bereaved parents, mainly mothers, who continually demonstrated in front of his house, blaming him for the death of their sons and refusing to be consoled by paeans to national sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

The military cannot be seen as totally separate from other spheres in Israeli society. The sexual division of labor in the Israeli army constitutes both a part and an extension of the sexual division of labor in the civilian labor market. Within the military, women occupy occupational jobs similar to those in which they are engaged in civilian life – clerical, educational, and social service. The main difference is that of military uniform and discipline. The only major women's occupations in the civilian sphere not represented in the military are those connected with the bearing and rearing of children. This reflects the basic nature of women's participation in the military, which, unlike men's, is only a temporary phase in their lives, before marriage and motherhood. It also reflects the fact that the categories of women – Oriental, poor, and religious – in Israeli Jewish society who bear the main responsibility for child production are underrepresented in the army population.

Since the time of the *Yishuv,* a consistent pattern has defined the sexual division of labor in the Israeli military, that of the front/rear. Once the front and the rear are defined as two separate functional/geographical areas, if only by the first being the fields of the settlement and the latter its buildings, men will usually go to the front and women will be left in the rear. However, during the pre-state period, when the rear and the front were less differentiated geographically, the primary emphasis was on functional differentiation – allocating women, with some exceptions, to auxiliary noncombatant roles in the front, as well as in the rear area. Later, after the state and its army were established, the emphasis changed to the contextual-geographical (the front during times of war) in addition to but even more important than the functional differentiation.

Several explanations for the change are possible. It may be due in part to the state's ideology concerning the nature of the military. In the *Hagana* and *Palmach,* a more "socialist" or "liberationist" ideology prevailed, which was both informal and flexible in its nature. In *Zahal,* the ideological inspiration has come to a great extent from other Western state armies, particularly the British, which maintains a much more conservative approach to sexual divisions in the military. Another explanation, however, could be that with the transformation of the Israeli military from a voluntary to a regular-recruited army, enough men became available to

fulfill the noncombatant functions in the front itself. These men most probably would not have been in the pre-state voluntary military or even in Israeli society at all. They were part of the post-1948 mass migration of Oriental Jews and refugees to Israel.

In different categories of military labor, then, the dynamics of front and rear are determined by different patterns in which various categories of women and men drawn from Israeli society are differently located. Ethnic and class divisions, which transcend the boundaries of the military and operate in Israeli society as a whole, intermesh with the sexual division of labor.

Beyond the conditions of labor power availability, according to different gender and social categories, or even the "objective" threat of Palestinian and Arab military attacks, a crucial dimension determining the dynamics of the front/rear pattern in the Israeli military has been its national/political/strategic goals. The most important exclusionary boundary specifying the categories of Israeli people who participate in the military has been the national one. It determines that 100 percent of the women and the overwhelming majority of the men who participate in the Israeli military are Jewish. In the 1970s, pressure on "manpower" in the army intensified, not so much because the mass migration to Israel stopped, but because of Israel's determination to keep the occupied territories. We have seen how national strategies and goals play a central role in determining the sexual division of labor within and in relation to the military. They determine to an extent the role of women as mothers – suppliers of future soldiers; they determine the role of women inside the army – as educators, integrators, and morale-boosters of male soldiers. The strategies and goals also determine the degree to which, as men's "helpmates," women will be needed to fill in former male posts, in times of expansion of the front.

Analysis of the "military labor market" also reveals how the state treats different groups of women differently for national purposes. Whatever is defined as the "national interest" is not, however, homogeneous, and contradictions and conflicts often emerge even within one hegemonic ideological trend. For instance, the Israeli military has primarily utilized educated Jewish women as auxiliaries and teachers at the rear and, occasionally, even at the front. This has been one of the effects as well as one of the reasons that poor and religious (mainly Oriental) women have been the major

reproducers of humanpower in Israel. However, in recent debates concerning the Israeli army, the resulting long-term change in the nature of the army's "human material" in the last few years—in terms of ethnic and class origin—has been cited as one of the major causes of the army's deterioration.[36]

This complexity of factors is often missing in the various approaches used to analyze women's labor market situation. Sex difference is by no means the only relevant factor in the allocation of labor positions. Differences in class, ethnic origin, and religion must also be considered in order to understand the division of labor, both within the military and outside it. Moreover, in order to understand women's position in the labor market at a specific historical moment, it is essential that one understand national ideologies and policies concerning men's roles as well as ideologies concerning women's roles. Therefore, the conventional framework for analyzing the labor market should be expanded to include, in addition to paid employment, not only domestic labor and volunteer work (as has been pointed out by Veronica Beechey),[37] but also the categories of work that constitute "national service," whether military or civil.

NOTES

An earlier draft of this article was presented at the conference on Women in Militaries at the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, which produced *Loaded Questions: Women in the Military,* ed. Wendy Chapkis (Amsterdam: Transnational Insitute, 1981). I would like to thank the participants in this conference, especially Cynthia Enloe, for their useful comments. Thanks also to all others who gave their time to read and respond to the paper: Rivka Bar-Yoseph and Moshe Lisak of the Hebrew University, Daphne Izraeli from Tel Aviv University, Floya Anthias and Nance Goldstein from Thames Polytechnic, and the members of the *Feminist Studies* editorial board—especially Ruth Milkman. I thank you all but hold only myself responsible for what has eventually emerged.

1. A discussion of that question, among others, can be found in Cynthia Enloe's, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto Press, 1983; Boston: South End Press, 1984).
2. Cynthia Enloe, "Women—the Reserve Army of Army Labour," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 12 (1980).
3. Palmach refers to the commando battalions of the national defense organization in the pre-state period. Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was the Women's Corps in the British Army in which women from Palestine served in World War II. Both will be discussed in more detail later in the article.

4. For more detailed historical reviews of this period, some of which differ in perspective from that given here, see, for example, the following: Arie Bober, ed. *The Other Israel* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1972); Uri Davis, Andrew Mack, and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds. *Israel and the Palestinians* (London: Ithaca Press, 1975); S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Israeli Society* (Tel Aviv: Magnes Publishing House, 1967); Moshe Lisak and Dan Horowitz, *From Yishuv to the State,* (Am Oved, 1977), in Hebrew; Maxine Rodinson, *Israel, a Colonial Settler State?* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973); and Nathan Weinstock, *Zionism, False Messiah* (London: Ink Press, 1981). In terms of women's specific participation in the military in the pre-state period, other more detailed historical reviews can be found in two papers presented at the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society National Conference at the University of Chicago, October 1980: Ann R. Bloom, "The Women in Israel's Military Forces"; and N.L. Goldman and V.L. Wiegand, "The Utilization of Women in Combat: The Case of Israel." Part of the historical review of this paper is based on these papers' reviews.
5. See Daphne N. Izraeli, "The Women's Movement in Palestine, 1911-1927" (Paper presented at the Conference of the International Sociological Association, Upsala, Sweden, 1978).
6. Yigal Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army* (London: Valentine, 1970). In Hebrew see, *The History of the Hagana,* (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot, 1956).
7. Goldman and Wiegand.
8. See memoirs of Menahem Begin, *The Revolt,* (New York: Dell Books, 1977).
9. See Bloom.
10. See B. Chabas, *Women of Valor: The Story of Palestine A.T.S.* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1964), in Hebrew.
11. Yehuda Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance* (New York: Block, 1958), 280.
12. Bloom, 34.
13. Goldman and Wiegand, 18.
14. Zwi Shif and Eitan Haber, *Lexicon of the Security of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan, 1976), 439, in Hebrew.
15. Ibid. 440. A "preemptive" strike means that Israel does not wait to be attacked, but attacks so that war will be on the territory of the enemy rather than on its own.
16. Ibid., 216-18.
17. Ibid., 218.
18. "The Government Report of the Committee on the Position of Women," *Discussion and Facts* (Jerusalem: Office of the Prime Minister, 1978), 103.
19. Ibid., 89.
20. Ibid., 97.
21. *The Annual Government Book* (Jerusalem, 1927), 120, in Hebrew.
22. Bloom, 46. She quotes the figure from a high-ranking officer in 1980.
23. Interview with Shuli Eshel, producer of a documentary film on women in *Zahal* shown on Israeli television in April 1981. The difference between the data on the number of professions open to women in 1977-78 and 1980 may indicate that there is a penetration of women into new technical and operational jobs. But the number of professions open to women does not necessarily affect their continual concentration in clerical work; and in 1984 Ora Namir, director of the government report on the position of women, remarked that none of the recommendations of the report, including the military-related ones, were carried out.
24. Shif and Haber.
25. Report in *Ha'aretz* newspaper, February 1981, in Hebrew.
26. Although since the Lebanon War, even this aspect of military life did not escape the disenchanted eye of the Israeli media. See, for example, the article "To Be a Lover of a Colonel is Quite a Status," in *Ha'aretz,* 20 March 1985.

27. "*Chen*—The Women's Corps," Israeli Defense Organization spokesman, Israel Defense Forces, 30 May 1972.
28. *Statistical Abstracts of Israel,* 1982.
29. *Discussion and Facts.*
30. Ibid.
31. D. Izraeli and K. Gaier, "Sex and Interoccupational Wage Differences in Israel," *Sociology of Work and Occupations* (November 1979): 404-29.
32. For more detailed analysis of the Israeli Jewish women's role of national reproduction, see my forthcoming article on this topic in *Women, Nation, State,* ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias (Verso, forthcoming); also see my *Israeli Women and Men: Divisions behind the Unity* (Change Publications, 1982).
33. Cohen, quoted in Leslie Hazelton, *Israeli Women—The Reality behind the Myth* (Jerusalem: Idanim, 1978), in Hebrew.
34. David Ben Gurion, *Israel, a Personal History* (American Israel Publishers, 1972), 323-34.
35. L. Shamgar, "War Widows in Israeli Society" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1979), in Hebrew. Since the economic crisis, however, the economic position of many of the widows has severely deteriorated, and last year a protest movement of war widows has arisen that has had wide popular support.
36. See, for example, Ari Sharit's article, "Is Israel Withdrawing from the Army," *Koteret Rashit,* 15 May 1985. (Other similar articles appeared around this time in other Israeli papers such as *Ha'aretz* and *Haolam Hazeh.*)
37. Veronica Beechey, "Women's Employment in Contemporary Britain" (Paper presented at the British Sociological Association Annual Conference, 1984).