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STEPS WHICH CAN BE TAKEN FOR THE PRACTICAL REALIZATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Study prepared by Mrs. L.D. Filippova

In General Assembly resolution 2081 (XX) of 20 December 1965 the Preparatory Committee for the Conference was instructed, inter alia, to organize and direct the preparation of the necessary evaluation studies and other documentation. In pursuance of the General Assembly's decisions, the Secretary-General has provided participants in the Conference with various reports, studies and other documents under the symbol A/CONF.32/....

With regard to the evaluation studies, the Preparatory Committee felt that, where necessary, the Secretary-General would find qualified persons with backgrounds in the various social and legal systems to assist him. Accordingly, the Secretary-General has invited a limited number of leading experts from various regions to submit studies on selected topics. These experts have been free to express their own opinions and, in particular, to present an independent evaluation of United Nations activities in the field of human rights.

This document contains a study prepared by L.D. Filippova, Cand. Histor. Sci. USSR.

The views expressed in the study are those of the author.

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PART ONE

SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

I. Role of the United Nations in improving the status of women

For many centuries economic, social, cultural and other factors have conspired to give woman a position in society inferior to man's. It is true that leading thinkers have long been pointing out that to deny woman the same rights and status as man hampers the development of society as a whole, because "there can be no free society where half its members - the women - are oppressed" (Charles Fourier). It is true, also, that for nearly two centuries progressives have unremittingly campaigned for sex equality and that certain socialist countries have provided brilliant examples of what women can achieve when they enjoy real equality. Nevertheless, prejudices about the role of women in society remain strong to this day.

In the past twenty years, the United Nations and its specialized agencies have devoted perhaps more attention to the manifold questions relating to women's rights and status, including maternity and child protection, than to any other individual social problem. To some extent this has made for an improvement in the legal status of women. Equality of rights for both sexes is proclaimed in a number of provisions of the United Nations Charter. It is also laid down in the charters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other agencies. In 1952, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. In 1951-1952 the ILO adopted two conventions on the rights of working women. It is only since the signature of the United Nations Charter in 1945 that full or partial political rights for women have been confirmed, conferred or extended in eighty-six countries. Prior to that date no steps had been taken in half those countries even to enfranchise women.[1/]

Since 1945, dozens of countries have become parties to a whole series of conventions on women's rights: the Convention on the Political Rights of Women

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1/ A/6447.

adopted in 1952, ratified by fifty-four countries; the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, adopted in 1957, ratified by thirty-six countries; the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, adopted in 1962, ratified by seventeen countries; the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted in 1960, ratified by thirty-six countries. Nearly one half of the membership of the United Nations has recognized the conventions concerning that most important right of women, the right to work. On 1 October 1966, fifty-three countries became parties to ILO Convention No. 100 on equal pay for equal work (Equal Remuneration Convention). Fifty-six countries have ratified ILO Convention No. 111 (Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention).[1/] Dozens of countries have signed the Maternity Protection Convention, the Convention concerning Night Work of Women and a number of other conventions.

The United Nations has indubitably made a constructive and useful contribution by organizing seminars on the status of women throughout the world, carrying out a number of interesting surveys and publishing the results. It must nevertheless be said that in many countries the process of giving effect to women's rights is extremely slow. The results are clearly disproportionate to the time and effort expended by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

In considering questions connected with the position of women anywhere in the world and with their equality in society, the basic point to be emphasized at the outset is that in a society where both men and women are deprived of basic political, economic or social rights, it is difficult to speak about equal rights for women without violating common sense. To do so would be to reduce all problems arising in connexion with the position of women to minor, semi-technical questions of a civil or economic character. The "status of women problem" itself can be resolved only as part of the whole gamut of problems concerned with human rights as a whole.

The solution of these problems depends above all on the social, political and economic structure of the State. In a society which has ended the exploitation of man by man, where the right of nations to self-determination and independent

development has become reality, where economic and social-political institutions are designed to serve, not to oppress man, the whole intricate web of problems connected with human rights can be much more rapidly, more completely and more effectively solved.

The most salutary influence towards their solution comes from the national liberation movement conducted by previously dependent countries against colonialism. The abolition of what remains of the colonial system is in itself creating certain prerequisites for a growing respect for human rights. Economic and cultural development and social progress are unthinkable without strict observance of the principle of national independence and respect for the principle of self-determination of peoples and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other nations.

This does not mean there is any justification for failing to accord matters specifically connected with the position of women in society the importance of problems in their own right. The specific problem is determined by a whole series of powerful factors, from the social-political structure of a given State to the socially predominant philosophical ideas which have taken shape in the course of history, from woman's position in the family to the distinctive characteristics of the female organism.

The framework and the aim of this paper obliges the author to concentrate chiefly on these specific questions; but this does not, of course, imply any intention of artificially separating the problem of equal rights for women from the problem of human rights as a whole.

II. Some problems arising in connexion with giving effect to women's rights

1. Political rights. In many parts of the world women are denied not only their social and economic rights but also their political rights, the provision of which by the State does not, of course, require any particular efforts or financial expenditure. Almost throughout the world, for example, women are constitutionally entitled to hold office in the highest organs of government on an equal footing with men; yet in many countries they are in practice virtually excluded from public office (see table 1).

Table 1

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

(Percentage of women in parliaments in 1964)*

		Parliaments									
		10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Greece	0.3										
Argentina	0.4										
Turkey	1.1										
Laos	1.3										
Upper Volta	1.3										
United States	2.0										
Cameroon	2.0										
Central Africa	2.0										
Portugal	2.3										
Panama	2.4										
United Kingdom	2.7										
Canada	2.7										
South Africa	2.7										
Jamaica	3.0										
Japan	3.3										
Tanzania	3.4										
Ireland	3.9										
Iran	4.0										
Pakistan	5.1										
New Zealand	6.2										
India	7.3										
Netherlands	8.0										
Austria	8.0										
Israel	8.3										
Philippines	8.6										
Norway	8.7										
Trinidad and Tobago	9.0										
Denmark	9.4										
Costa Rica	10.5										
Poland	11.6										
Finland	13.5										
Sweden	14.3										
Bulgaria	15.6										
Romania	16.4										
Hungary	18.0										
Yugoslavia	19.6										
USSR	28.0										
Colombia	30.7										
Ukrainian SSR	34.1										
Byelorussian SSR	35.9										

*Based on official data supplied to the United Nations. See E/CN.6/430, and statistics on parliamentary membership taken from the United Nations Yearbook on Human Rights, 1965 and the Statesman's Yearbook, 1967-1968, London, Macmillan.

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A recent UNESCO survey showed that not only was the percentage of women in parliament very low in a number of countries, but also that there had been a tendency for the percentage to diminish since the time when women first won the right to be elected.[1/]

This regressive tendency, which can be observed in a number of countries, was brought to the attention of the seminar on civic and political education of women held in Helsinki in 1967.

In some countries where the right to vote and to be elected was given to women forty, sixty and even seventy years ago, not more than ten to fifteen women have actually been elected to parliament over the whole subsequent period.

Although the total percentage of women in the public service is relatively high in a number of countries, the real participation of women in the management of the State is negligible; in other words, an absolute majority of the women employed fulfils technical, auxiliary functions.

2. The right to work. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right of every person to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. The constitutions of Member States of the United Nations for the most part contain no special restrictions on women's right to work. Women have begun to take a fairly active part in social production, particularly in recent decades. At present women constitute one third of the total labour force in many parts of the world, and the proportion continues to rise. Unfortunately, these optimistic calculations may mislead public opinion as to the real state of affairs in regard to the exercise of women's right to work.

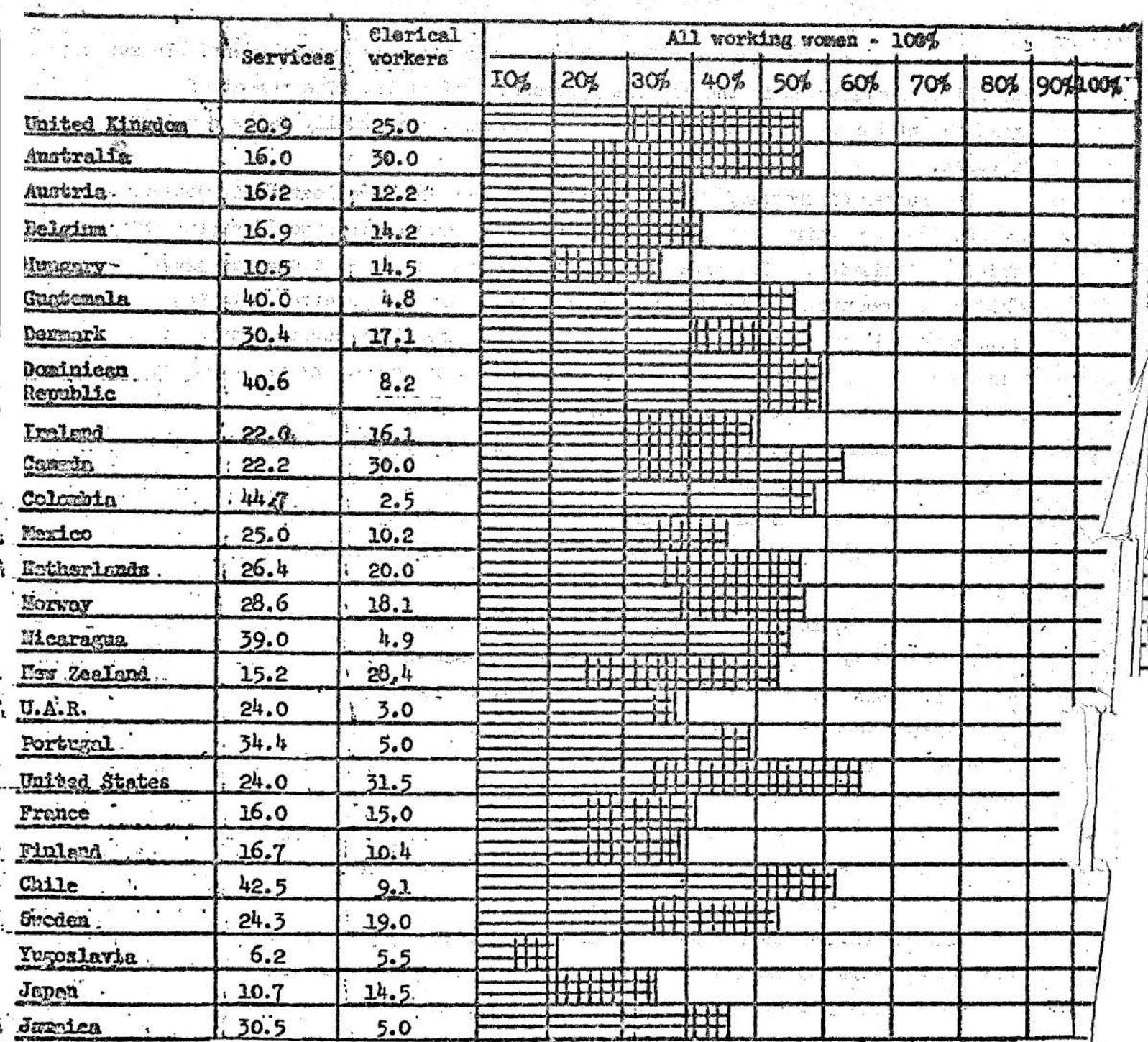
In many parts of the world, grave discrimination against women still exists. Women are employed mainly in the least interesting and least remunerative types of work. An analysis of female employment in various branches of industry, agriculture, the arts and management shows a very high percentage of women among servants, clerical, unskilled and semi-skilled workers (see table 2), but that the number of women engaged in professional, technical and creative jobs is insignificant, that only a small proportion of skilled workers are women and that fewer still occupy executive positions.

1/ UNESCO Chronicle No. 6 December 1967, p. 7.

Table 2

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN VARIOUS BRANCHES OF THE ECONOMY
1967

	Services	Clerical workers
United Kingdom	20.9	25.0
Australia	16.0	30.0
Austria	16.2	12.2
Belgium	16.9	14.2
Hungary	10.5	14.5
Guatemala	40.0	4.8
Denmark	30.4	17.1
Dominican Republic	40.6	8.2
Ireland	22.0	16.1
Canada	22.2	30.0
Colombia	44.7	2.5
Mexico	25.0	10.2
Netherlands	26.4	20.0
Norway	28.6	18.1
Nicaragua	39.0	4.9
New Zealand	15.2	28.4
U.A.R.	24.0	3.0
Portugal	34.4	5.0
United States	24.0	31.5
France	16.0	15.0
Finland	16.7	10.4
Chile	42.5	9.1
Sweden	24.3	19.0
Yugoslavia	6.2	5.5
Japan	10.7	14.5
Jamaica	30.5	5.0



Service workers - domestic service, cleaners, laundresses, kitchen workers and cooks.

Clerical workers - typists and stenographers, bookkeepers, cashiers.

* Based on figures contained in "Yearbook of labour statistics. ILO, Geneva, 1967.

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To this day, millions of women are unable to exercise their right to work at all.

One of the most serious problems in the world today is unemployment. In many countries unemployment is the customary economic situation. The threat of unemployment hangs over tens of millions of workers, but usually falls heaviest on women.

The number of unemployed women, that is, women who have lost their jobs or are looking for their first jobs, is in fact much greater than would appear from official statistics. The true picture is distorted because no one, at least within the framework of the United Nations, is specially concerned with the problems of the unemployed woman. From the theoretically accurate premise that women workers constitute a part of the general labour force, the false conclusion is drawn that the reasons for unemployment among men and among women are the same.

In a number of countries the very approach used in calculating the number of unemployed women is highly controversial: many who are unemployed because they have lost their jobs or are seeking employment are simply not counted as unemployed. This applies particularly to married women dependent on their husbands.

In addition, no account whatsoever is taken of mothers willing and able to work, but forced to stay at home for lack of pre-school institutions for their children. This category of women is constantly increasing; every year more and more married women and mothers desire to take gainful employment. These women do not come under the heading of unemployed in the accepted sense of the term, but they are in fact persons who are unable to exercise their right to work. Their number is hard to determine. This is a matter calling for serious and thorough investigation from fresh principles, since existing statistics are useless for further work in this field of inquiry.

Discrimination against women still exists in regard to remuneration for work. For twenty years the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the International Labour Organisation have been concerned with the question of equal pay for equal work. Since ratification of ILO Convention No. 100 in 1952, the Economic and Social Council has regularly, in pursuance of the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women, adopted a succession of

documents amounting essentially to recommendations and appeals to ratify the Convention, addressed to Governments which have not yet done so, to do so and calling on all other Governments to take the necessary steps to implement its principles.1/ Fifty-four countries have signed the Convention but its implementation is on the whole a slow process. In some countries there is a tendency to apply the principle of equal pay to only a small section of workers. As a rule, the principle is applied more readily in those branches of industry where few women are employed (the motor-car, building and transport industries) and very slowly where women are in the majority. There is an endeavour to avoid applying the principle of equal pay by adopting a tendentious approach to the evaluation of female labour in any classification of trades or types of work. In many cases, States have refused to alter their legislation in order to guarantee women the right to the same pay as men. In some countries it is held that "the adjustment of the wages of female workers to those of their male colleagues should take place gradually,... with due observance of the possibilities", that is, equal pay for equal work "provided the economic margin allows of it" (E/CN.6/468, para. 79). Not infrequently, implementation of the provisions of the Convention is left to the discretion of entrepreneurs, on the grounds that "legal or regulative intervention in wage-fixing /is/ contrary to tradition" (E/CN.6/468, para. 25).

In many countries the question of social security and the welfare of invalids and the aged has not been solved or, at best, only partially solved. Here again it is women's interest that suffer first. Since in many cases they have been deprived of the right to work, women are automatically deprived also of the existing few rights to security in their old age. The high retirement age set by law puts women at a disadvantage in comparison with men, by compelling them to go on working at a time of life when they are under exceptional strain, to the detriment of their health.

3. Maternity protection. Maternity protection is an immensely important factor in assisting women to exercise their right to work. Although the United Nations and its specialized agencies have long been concerned with this problem

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1/ ECOSOC resolutions 445 E (XIV), 28 May 1952; 504 (XVI), 23 June 1953; 547 E (XVIII), 12 July 1954; 587 C (XX), 3 August 1955; 652 D (XXIV), etc.

too, and it is thought that "today there are very few countries indeed which lack this basic form of protection for women workers", as the ILO reported at its forty-eighth session (Report VI (1), p. 50), this problem is far from resolved. In many countries working women are still denied maternity leave, or are allowed it only on an unpaid basis and for so short a period as to make no difference to women's real chances of taking employment. Another serious problem that still faces a woman who works or who desires to work is that of the care of her children. Most countries do very little about providing kindergartens and nurseries.

4. The right to education. Education is regarded as one of the most essential prerequisites for the exercise of human rights. This is particularly true in the case of women. Yet in the educational sphere, too, women in most countries have not achieved equality with men.

Although in many countries the percentage of women students in vocational training is fairly high, closer analysis shows that an absolute majority of them consists of future typists, stenographers, specialist secretaries or people merely taking so-called "domestic economy" courses, which do not qualify them for anything except to run a household. There are very few women attending training skilled workers courses for advanced branches of industry, where special qualifications are required and pay is higher.

Discrimination against women is particularly marked in regard to their right both to higher education and to secondary technical training. In many countries the ratio of women to men in these branches of education, especially in institutions of higher education, is still heavily in favour of men. In a number of countries where the total percentage of women students in colleges is relatively high, the number of professions open to women is in practice very small.

Moreover, the reassuring picture sometimes presented by statistical averages often conceals the somewhat special true situation, for a huge proportion of the women students is, at best, confined to the teacher-training departments of institutes of higher education, or to a particular range of arts subjects. The latter, of course, gives women an education, but no profession, and makes their economic independence more than problematical. In many countries there are very few women students of medicine, law, architecture, engineering or agriculture (see table 3). The usual reason is financial: if parents have to choose between

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Table 3

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN STUDENTS BY BRANCH OF STUDY
IN THE PERIOD 1961-1965

(Percentage of women in total enrolments)*

	% of women among all students	Education %	Law %	Engineering %	Medicines %	Agriculture %
Argentina	32	82	36	2	34	9
Australia	28	59	9	0	29	2
Austria	24	42	16	4	31	9
Belgium	30	59	16	8	32	2
Brazil	29	83	18	4	22	5
United Kingdom	37	37	23	1	26	12
Hungary	40	78	45	15	48	18
Venezuela	31	57	32	6	42	6
Denmark	36	55	29	4	31	7
India	17	34	3	1	20	0
Iran	18	19	10	1	20	6
Italy	32	75	17	1	18	2
Israel	43	81	24	6	25	9
Spain	21	65	12	1	21	2
Cuba	39	74	37	11	37	16
Madagascar	28	48	18	0	67	18
Morocco	16	25	7	2	25	1
Norway	22	29	8	2	20	6
Netherlands	18	47	25	1	20	13
Nicaragua	25	50	22	1	20	0
UAR	20	35	14	6	26	1
Pakistan	14	31	1	0	23	0
Poland	35	53	34	12	61	30
Romania	37	52	21	19	52	21
Syria	15	29	9	3	25	0
USSR	45	65	57	32	55	26
USA	38	74	4	1	7	3
Thailand	25	53	4	2	48	22
Turkey	21	40	22	11	24	10
Finland	49	54	23	3	45	35
Philippines	59	32	16	8	68	10
Ceylon	35	33	11	1	26	18
Czechoslovakia	37	68	35	14	62	22
Yugoslavia	30	12	26	12	46	12
Japan	23	51	3	0	29	3

* Based on figures contained in E/CN.6/451/Add.1.

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educating a son or a daughter, they normally give preference to the son. Another reason is prejudice, often expressed in doubt as to the ability of women to be as good as men in the role of a doctor, lawyer, architect or engineer.

III. The State's role in guaranteeing women's social and economic rights

Notwithstanding the ratification of a series of conventions on women's rights by a considerable number of States, hundreds of millions of women throughout the world are still far from enjoying effective equality with men. These conventions do not exclude but, on the contrary, specify the necessity for further elaboration of the provisions actually contained in them and for defining the ways in which the principles they enshrine will be put into effect. Many Governments, however, in practice, confine themselves to formal recognition of the conventions and at best reflect the relevant provisions in general formulae in their constitutions or even in the preambles thereto.

Of course, the very fact of ratifying a convention on the rights of women and the reflection of these rights, even in the most general terms, in the basic, most authoritative law of the State, the law which has overriding force, is of great importance. While it does not automatically ensure the exercise of women's rights, it does help the movement for social progress.

In the interest of truth, however, any appraisal of the situation in a particular region or country should take into account the frequently enormous gap between the solemn proclamation of a right and its being given practical effect. As Karl Marx pointed out long ago, a constitution can be promulgated on paper, granting every citizen the right to education, to work and so forth, but it is not enough to put these noble aspirations on paper: there still remains the problem of embodying these liberal ideas in actual and enlightened social institutions.

It may thus be said that before rights which have been proclaimed can be put into effect a whole series of conditions of an economic, legal, political and ideological character is required.

The protection of the citizen's rights and freedoms, their confirmation through legislation, their application in practice and the economic, political

and administrative arrangements guaranteeing them are the sovereign affair of each State. If a State ratifies a convention, it thereby assumes responsibility for promptly carrying out the provisions of that convention. It is for the State itself to decide on the means it will use to that end. Any attempt to impose any particular method is unacceptable. What is important is the fulfilment of the obligation.

On the other hand, the international protection of human rights and freedoms under the United Nations Charter is to be achieved through "international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". The experience of a number of countries has shown that this aim is more readily achieved if the state itself confirms these rights through legislation and lays down in constitutional instruments the methods whereby the stated rights are to be ensured. This is particularly important in connexion with the implementation of social, economic and cultural rights. For if the constitution proclaims, for example, that all citizens have equal rights to education or medical services, but the state does not provide the required number of free schools and hospitals, then such equality remains on paper, since the difference in the economic position of the citizens nullifies the rights enunciated.

In many countries, economic, social and cultural rights are not provided for in the Constitution. Such rights are not regarded as "legal" rights, and from this it is concluded that the State cannot undertake responsibility for their recognition and guarantee. This argument arouses serious doubts. The contemporary development of society shows that economic, social and cultural rights have acquired the character of basic and inalienable human rights, in the same way as political and civil rights. Experience shows that social and economic rights are fundamental to the achievement of political and civil rights. As far back as 1950, the General Assembly noted that the enjoyment of civil and political freedoms and of economic, social and cultural rights were interconnected and interdependent, and that when deprived of economic, social and cultural rights man did not represent the human person whom the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarded as the ideal of the free man.

If it is important for all citizens that economic and social rights be included in the Constitution and that measures for their implementation be given constitutional sanction, for women this is essential. Moreover, women need a whole series of additional social and economic rights; special conditions have to be created for them, even to the extent - paradoxical though this may appear - of according them privileges to enable them to achieve social equality. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that woman's special role in the family, her functions as a mother and the character of the female organism must be taken into account. Without special State protection of the interests of the mother and child a woman cannot exercise her right to work. During her best years (20 to 35) which are the most productive from the point of view of devoting her energies and abilities to society, a woman is doomed not to work, but to act as nurse and housekeeper. This situation, as unfortunate as it is typical, occurs where pre-school institutions and centres for the care of children after school hours, either do not exist, or are too few in number.

The age-specific activity rates for women in thirteen industrialized countries confirms this conclusively (see table 4). Whereas the proportion of unmarried working women between ages 20 and 24 reaches 82 per cent, remains at almost the same level for the 25-35 age bracket and falls only slightly - to 74.4 per cent - in the next ten years (ages 35 to 45), only 24.9 per cent of married women aged 20 to 25 are employed and only 19.1 per cent in the 25-35 age bracket; and not until the ages of 35 to 45, that is when the children are older, does the employment curve for married women rise slightly.[1/] It is obvious that not only do women themselves suffer, by being denied the possibility of participating in the work of society, but society itself suffers, by being deprived of a vast number of workers at the height of their powers.

This important point is often ignored or, at best, underestimated when human resources are being mobilized for economic progress and social development. In many countries there is now a considerable number of persons fully capable of

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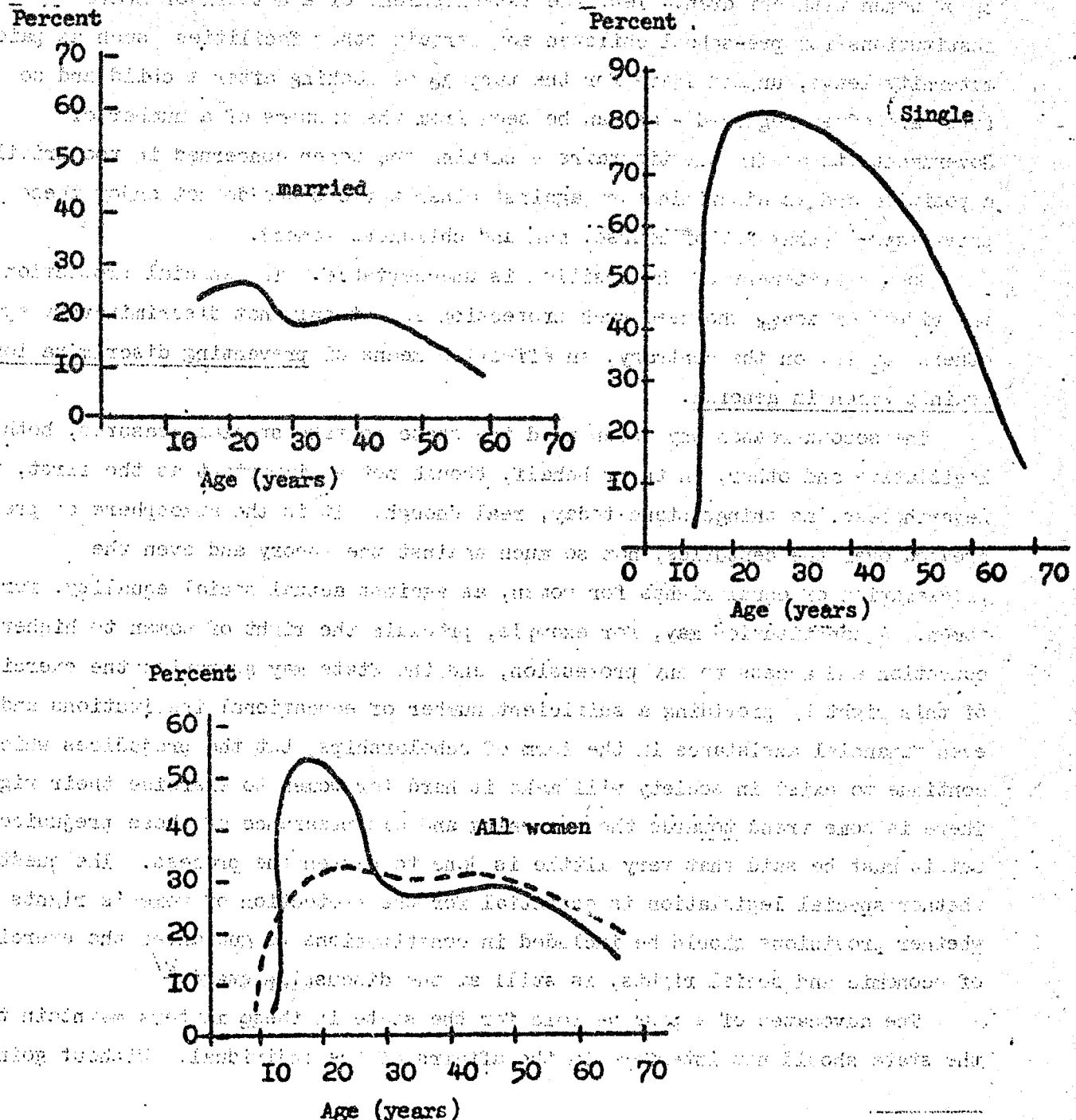
1/ Demographic Aspects of Manpower, Report 1, United Nations 1962.

Table 4

AVERAGE ACTIVITY RATES FOR SINGLE, MARRIED AND ALL WOMEN BY AGE*



* From Demographic Aspects of Manpower, Report 1, Population Studies, No. 33, United Nations, New York, 1962.

working, who for one reason or another do not work and consequently live entirely or partly at the expense of society. A substantial proportion of these is made up of women with children. Yet, the establishment of a network of State institutions for pre-school children and certain other facilities, such as paid maternity leave, unpaid leave for the purpose of looking after a child and so forth are often regarded - as can be seen from the answers of a number of Governments to an ILO questionnaire - putting the women concerned in too privileged a position and as discriminatory against other workers who do not enjoy these privileges[1/] (that is, of course, men and childless women).

Such a statement of the position is unacceptable. The special protection of the rights of women who need such protection is not only not discriminatory against others but is, on the contrary, an effective means of preventing discrimination against women in general.

The second reason why women need the state to take special measures, both legislative and other, on their behalf, though not as important as the first, is nevertheless, as things stand today, real enough. It is the atmosphere of prejudice created over the centuries, not so much against the theory and even the proclamation of equal rights for women, as against actual social equality, for women. A constitution may, for example, proclaim the right of women to higher education and access to any profession, and the State may guarantee the exercise of this right by providing a sufficient number of educational institutions and even financial assistance in the form of scholarships, but the prejudices which continue to exist in society will make it hard for women to exercise their right. There is some trend towards the weakening and disappearance of these prejudices, but it must be said that very little is done to hasten the process. The question whether special legislation is essential for the protection of women's rights and whether provisions should be included in constitutions to guarantee the exercise of economic and social rights, is still at the discussion stage.[2/]

The advocates of a passive role for the state in these matters maintain that the state should not interfere in the affairs of the individual. Without going

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1/ International Labour Conference, forty-eighth session, Geneva, 1964, p. 134.

2/ See Seminar documents, Warsaw, 1967.

into the merits of this theory - which is more than open to challenge - we must make the point that discrimination is eliminated through the co-operation of the individual, society and the state. The practical realization of human rights, especially of economic and social rights, depends on a satisfactory system of mutual relations between the individual and the state, and here the state's action is of decisive significance. It is precisely the state, through its organs of government, which should bear the main responsibility for the promition, protection and practical realization of women's rights. The legislative, executive and judicial powers of every state are instruments for the realization of these rights. Women achieve real social equality precisely in those countries where the state and its government organs actively seek to give effect to women's rights.

This contention is borne out by the situation which has been created in the USSR.

IV. The Soviet State and the guarantee of women's rights

The distinctive feature of the Socialist State is that it concentrates not on declaring rights but on guaranteeing their exercise. Article 122 of the USSR Constitution reads:

> "Women in the USSR are accorded all rights on an equal footing with men in all spheres of economic, government, cultural, political and other social activity.
>
> "The possibility of exercising these rights is ensured by women being accorded the same rights as men to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and also by State protection of the interests of mother and child, State aid to mothers of large families and to unmarried mothers, maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens."

1. The guaranteed right to work. The most important social and economic right, the right to work, is secured by law, equally for all citizens , whether male or female, under the Constitution of the USSR and the Constitutions of the Union Republics. In the USSR, the right to work is the right to a secure job in the individual's special field, under favourable working conditions and with remuneration corresponding to the effort expended. Article 118 of the USSR Constitution therefore emphasizes that the right to work is ensured through the

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socialist organization of the national economy, the steady growth of the productive forces of Soviet society and the elimination of the possibility of economic crises and unemployment. The Constitution further provides rights closely related to the right to work and dovetailed into it: the right to payment for work in accordance with its quantity and quality (article 118), the right to leisure (article 119), the right to material security in old age and also in case of illness and disability (article 120) and the right to education (article 121). There is also a whole series of legal guarantees of the exercise of the right to work: prohibition of illegal refusal of employment, systematic organization of employment for young people, provision of work in their special fields for young specialists who have completed their academic training, prohibition of dismissal of workers without the consent of factory or works committees; it is also a criminal offence for persons in authority to dismiss a worker or employee illegally, for personal reasons and so on. Under article 122 of the USSR Constitution on the equal rights of men and women, all these provisions apply fully to women.

This is of particular importance for women. As an example, we may refer to the extensive facilities for placing Soviet citizens in employment, and in particular to the unique system whereby young specialists are assigned to jobs as soon as they have completed their training in higher or secondary specialized educational institutions. A woman who has trained in a profession perhaps traditionally regarded as a male preserve does not have to waste her time and energy in looking for work, since the State assumes the responsibility for finding her work in her own field and uses its full authority to protect her from any attempt on the part of anyone to prevent her from working in that field.

The Soviet State has always been concerned to ensure the exercise of women's right to work. Ever since the inception of the Soviet régime, the state planning organs have studied the possibility of employing women in various spheres. The problems of female labour have without fail been reflected in the five-year national economic development plans, and as a result scores of undertakings are so organized as to make use of female labour on a carefully thought-out, scientific basis. In involving women in social labour the Soviet State is not guided by narrowly economic considerations. Sometimes, motivated by anxiety to co-operate in bringing about the economic independence of women, especially in the early years,

of the Soviet régime, it has even gone so far as to establish enterprises in some parts of the country, in the full realization that they would not be economically profitable. The main goal in such cases was to make social labour open to women.

Technical progress, extensive mechanization and automation of production have since broadened women's field of activity. At present, female labour is widely used in advanced branches of industry. Women enjoy absolute equality in employment in all spheres.1/

2. Special legal protection for working women. In order to ensure that women enjoy real equality with men, the Soviet State deems it necessary to offer women a series of supplementary privileges and to make special arrangements for the protection of their interests.

Soviet labour legislation provides, in addition to general rules for the protection of labour, a number of special rules which take account of women's special physiological characteristics. In addition to the advantages enjoyed by all working women, special privileges are provided for pregnant women and nursing mothers. Women workers and employees are entitled to maternity leave with full pay for fifty-six calendar days before and after childbirth (the post-natal period is extended to seventy days in cases of difficult confinement or multiple pregnancies). The right to prenatal and maternity leave and benefits is independent of prior length of service. Whole series of additional privileges is extended to pregnant women and nursing mothers: for example, pregnant women can be transferred to lighter work at the same average pay, extra (unpaid) is granted for purposes of looking after a child, nursing mothers are entitled to such work breaks at intervals of not less than three and a half hours, breaks being counted as working time, and so on.

Under Soviet law, it is illegal to refuse to employ a woman or to dismiss her from work or to withhold her pay on grounds of pregnancy or because she is nursing a child. Article 139 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR reads: "Refusal to employ a woman or dismissal of a woman on grounds of pregnancy is punishable by correctional labour for a maximum period of one year or by dismissal from

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1/ Excepted are trades classified as involving "especially heavy and dangerous" work and recognized in legislation as constituting a health hazard for women.

employment". It is interesting to note that protection of the labour rights of pregnant women and women with young children was first promulgated under an Act of 1922, at a time when production was drastically reduced through lack of fuel and raw materials. Although enterprises would have found it in their interests to cut back the employment of unskilled and illiterate women, rather than of men, the State promulgated a special law for the protection of female labour.

The working woman is entitled to social insurance on an equal footing with the working man. The distinctive feature of the system is that the social insurance fund is made up partly of contributions from the employing body and partly of allocations from the State budget. The manual and non-manual workers themselves have no expenses in connexion with social insurance. Women, like men, receive assistance from this fund in cases of temporary disability; it is this fund that provides pregnancy and maternity benefits and payments against medical certificates in respect of a sick child, regardless of the child's age.

At the age of fifty-five, that is, five years earlier than men, women are entitled to a pension paid entirely by the state, without any prior deductions from wages.

Legislation on employment of women is constantly being developed and improved. A draft of new Principles of Soviet Labour Legislation is at present the subject of nation-wide discussion. This draft provides for the further improvement and easing of work conditions for women.

3. Provision of pre-school facilities, boarding schools and extended day schools. An important factor in facilitating the participation of working mothers in the nation's work is the extensive provision of pre-school facilities by the state. At present, more than 9 million children in the Soviet Union attend round-the-year nurseries and kindergartens. In addition, summer nurseries and kindergartens are being established. In 1966, these catered for over 4 million children. Parents pay only one-quarter of the costs, the balance being made up by the state. The problem now is to provide nurseries and kindergartens for all who want them. A special law requires all enterprises and institutions, especially those employing large numbers of women, to provide kindergartens and nurseries. Permission for new industrial building is granted only on condition that fully adequate premises are simultaneously provided, to allow for the care of the women workers' children.

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To assist working women with children of school age, a special decree of the USSR Council of Ministers of 13 October 1956 provided for the establishment of extended day schools where children could remain under the teachers' supervision after school hours. The children have dinner and do their homework at school, play games and go home when their parents return from work. Boarding schools, where children spend five days of the week, returning home only for the weekend and on holidays, have become increasingly popular in recent years. Children are enrolled in these schools only at the desire of their parents. The children's board and lodging is covered mainly by the state, the parents contributing only 15 per cent of these expenses. Tuition, of course, as in other schools, is completely free. In 1965, 2.5 million children were attending boarding schools in the USSR.

An absolute majority of city children, both of pre-school and of school age, spends the summer holidays in the country. Nearly all kindergartens and nurseries move to the country in summer. Pioneer (children aged ten to sixteen) and tourist camps are also provided. A major part of the cost of summer holidays for children is borne by the trade unions and the state.

4. Public provision of domestic services. In order to free women from petty household tasks which, as Lenin put it, "dull woman's mind and eat up her time, strength, intelligence and energies in appallingly unproductive and exhausting work", the state aims at providing public services to meet the family's everyday needs: convenient and reasonably priced canteens, laundries, communal domestic services (including the cleaning and mending of clothes), provision of hot meals for school children and so on.

The creation of facilities for reducing and lightening household tasks has contributed a great deal towards enabling women in the USSR to take an active part, on an equal footing with men, in social production. At present women constitute 50 per cent of all employed persons in the country.

5. Guarantees of the right to education. The Soviet State does not confine itself to giving women an opportunity to work. It is anxious to see that, instead of vegetating in uninteresting and poorly paid jobs, they should also be the equals of men in regard to the kind of work open to them. An essential prerequisite for this is to give them wide opportunities for vocational training in accordance with the individual's bent and wishes.

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This is ensured through the system of general and compulsory eight-year and secondary education, through the broad development of the system of vocational and technical schools, through access to specialized secondary and higher education, through the free provision of all forms of education, through a system of state scholarships and the provision of free industrial, technical and agricultural training in factories, state farms and collective farms (article 121 of the USSR Constitution). In the 5,000 vocational technical institutes and schools with an annual enrolment of 2 million persons, girls are trained on an equal footing with boys for 975 different occupations, including those of automatic machine-tool fitter, supervisor of electromechanical and radiotechnical instruments, machine operator, electrician, laboratory assistant and so forth.

In the secondary schools boys and girls are taught together and follow the same standard official syllabuses; this is a precondition for ensuring that women shall have the possibility of continuing their studies in higher educational institutions on an equal footing with men. Women in the USSR are entitled to enter any specialized secondary or higher educational institution and to receive any vocational training they desire.

An extensive system of night schools and free correspondence courses contributes greatly towards ensuring that women are really able to exercise their right to education, since it gives them a chance to study without interrupting their employment and without detriment to the fulfilment of their maternal obligations. Anyone engaged on a course of study without interrupting his or her employment receives, under existing legislation, a number of exceptionally valuable privileges: they are given annual paid vacations in order to sit examinations, to complete and defend the projects they have undertaken for their diplomas, to prepare for and sit entrance examinations for post-graduate study (aspirantura), and for the degree of Candidate, or to defend a thesis. Such leave is granted in addition to the normal basic leave and irrespective of the length of employment. Under a series of statutory enactments, managements are responsible for making suitable arrangements for staff to combine gainful employment with study: for example, by shortening the working day or the working week for the persons concerned. The employment enterprise bears the full cost of such loss of time and the employee's pay is not affected.

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Today, since women have in law equal rights to education as men, they do not enjoy any special privileges, for these are no longer necessary. But in the first two decades after the Revolution, women, in addition to being granted general rights, received a whole series of advantages and privileges (which will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this report), enabling them in a fairly short time to assume a position of equality with men in literally all the country's educational institutions. Even in the highest educational institutions, where there had been virtually no women before the Revolution, women constituted one third of the entire student body within ten years of the Revolution, and more than one half ten years later.

Today, 45 per cent of all students in universities and institutes in the USSR are women; in medical schools women constitute 55 per cent of the student body, in teacher-training schools 65 per cent, in economics and law 57 per cent, in industrial, construction and transport schools 32 per cent. Fifty-one per cent of students at semi-professional (srednie spetsiolnye) schools are women; of these, 88 per cent are in educational institutions concerned with public health, 81 per cent in those concerned with culture and the arts, 82 per cent in those concerned with economics and law and 37 per cent in those concerned with industry and transport.

5. Some future prospects for women in the USSR. The Soviet State envisages a further improvement and easing of labour conditions for women, as well as the creation of all the social and domestic conditions necessary for combining happy motherhood with the increasingly active and creative participation of women in the social labour and public activity. In the national economic development plans it is stressed that women must be given lighter and at the same time well-paid types of work. A whole series of specialized laboratories and institutes is today engaged in working out effective measures for the protection of labour. The trade unions and the Ministry of Health alone control twenty-one such establishments. The intention is to provide an even greater number of nursery and allied facilities, so that every family so wishing will have the possibility of sending its children to free nurseries and kindergartens. By 1970, 12.5 million places will be available in such establishments.

It is also intended to expand the boarding school and extended day school system, to introduce free hot lunches in all schools and to provide all school

supplies and school uniforms free of charge. The strongest emphasis is placed on further developing the provision of facilities for relieving women of a substantial part of their domestic tasks. One way of doing this is to provide a larger number of moderately priced canteens and restaurants. Such establishments are already catering for 43 million people; by the end of 1970 there will be similar facilities for 70 million people. It is proposed that in the course of the 1980's free meals will be provided at the place of work for all industrial office and collective farm workers.

All this represents only a small fraction of what is planned for easing the working and living conditions of women in the USSR and giving the Soviet woman more time to study, to keep herself culturally well-informed and to develop her mind and personality to her own, her family's and her country's advantage.

Fifty years ago, the young Soviet State was faced with a whole concatenation of acute, contradictory and ill-defined problems connected with equality for women. Today there is no "rights of women" problem, in the accepted sense of the term, in the USSR, and the achievements of the Soviet State in ensuring equal rights for women are a matter of record both at home and abroad. In the brilliant light of these achievements less interest is already being shown in the question of how it was possible to accomplish such a radical break with the past and with the old outlook of millions of illiterate men and women, and to overcome the vast material difficulties entailed in resolving a whole range of such complex problems.

Despite differences in the social-political and economic structure of countries which today find themselves in urgent need of securing equal rights for women, despite differences in their way of life and family structure and despite their own particular religious notions and traditional views on the role of women in society, many countries are at this moment directly faced with problems in many ways similar to those which the Soviet Union had to solve fifty years ago.

In the second part of the present report we have collected material showing how certain problems relating to women's right to equality have been resolved in the Soviet Union. The author has not, of course, attempted a comprehensive review of the methods used, but, remaining within the terms of reference of the present report and having in view the aims of the conference, has selected certain material which, in her view, may prove interesting and perhaps useful to countries which are Members of the United Nations.

PART TWO

SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN SOCIETY

Tsarist Russia was one of the most backward capitalist countries, both economically and in regard to civil rights. Women especially were deprived of rights and oppressed. They did not possess even the most elementary rights and freedoms, and their inferior status was often emphasized in legislation. They had no voting rights and only very limited rights in regard to employment and education. Of the total number of women in gainful employment, 55 per cent worked as domestic servants, 25 per cent as farm labourers for landowners and wealthy peasants, 13 per cent in construction trades and 4 per cent in educational and health institutions. In industry women were restricted to a narrow range of traditionally female jobs for which no real training was required; in textiles, sewing, tobacco and food. These industries were technically the most backward and remuneration was much lower than elsewhere. Women, moreover, were paid only half as much as men for the same work.

In education and health women were again given only the lowliest jobs. They could not become doctors, teach in institutions of higher education or have a scientific career. Their lack of rights in the country's social and political life kept them equally without rights in the family. A wife could not even have her own passport; when necessary, her name was simply entered on her husband's passport.

Literacy, which was rare enough among men, was even rarer among women. According to the last pre-revolutionary census, only 16 per cent of the women and 40 per cent of the men could read and write.

Not until the Great October Socialist Revolution were women freed from all forms of exploitation and oppression and only then was the social inequality of women brought to an end.

The path to the solution of the problem of equal rights for women in the USSR was not easy. The young State, arising on the ruins of a semi-feudal régime, could not turn to anyone for guidance, since the relevant experience did not yet exist among mankind. In finding the answer to so complicated a social question as the

status of women, the Soviet State could rely only on the theoretical principles of Marxist-Leninist teaching and on the experience it accumulated for itself.

In contrast with certain existing theories which interpret the essence of the question narrowly, reducing it to the problem of achieving equality of rights between men and women, Marxism-Leninism sees the problem not from a narrow, legalistic point of view, but as a broad social and economic problem, to be solved as part of a radical transformation of the economic and political structure. So far as action by the State is concerned, on the purely practical level of solving specific, concrete aspects of the problem, genuine abolition of the inequality of women can be achieved only if allowance is made for the special circumstances of women's role in the family, the upbringing of children, and the special characteristics of the female organism, and if conditions are created permitting women to be drawn into the sphere of social production without placing an intolerable burden on them without crushing them physically and thereby depriving them of the chance to grow and develop mentally, for otherwise their active participation in the life of society is impossible.

Guided by these theoretical postulates, the Soviet State adopted a number of legislative, economic and ideological measures.

I. First legislative measures

Believing that legal equality was the first prerequisite and absolutely essential for practical equality, the young Soviet State carried out a complete legislative revolution in the first months of its existence. As early as 15 November 1917, women were placed on a footing of equality with men in the "Declaration of the Rights of the People" issued by the Government. The first Soviet Constitution adopted six months later ratified this equality. Women were given equal rights with men to take an active part in the political, economic, cultural and social life of the country.

On the fourth day after the working class had gained power, 11 November 1917, an eight-hour working day was decreed. The decree limited ove.time for women and prohibited night and underground work for them. On 9 December 1917, the Soviet State established equal pay for equal work, together with a minimum wage paid witho

distinction as to sex. On the fifth day of the Soviet Revolution, the Government promulgated its programme of social insurance. Under this programme, social insurance was extended to all employed workers without exception, to the poor of the cities and the countryside and to all cases of loss of ability to work, including sickness, injury, disability, old age, maternity, widowhood, orphanhood, and unemployment. Manual and non-manual workers were granted sickness benefit amounting to one month's earnings and received a month's paid holiday annually. Women, in addition, were given sixteen weeks' maternity leave with full pay, or in certain cases even one and a half times their pay. Nursing mothers were permitted to interrupt their work every three and a half hours for not less than half an hour. Because of the difficult food supply situation in the country and the system of distribution through ration cards in the early days after the Revolution, special "maternity" cards were introduced which entitled pregnant women and nursing mothers to extra rations in addition to the worker's ration. In December 1917, a decree was issued organizing boards for the protection and security of mothers and young children. The Soviet Government proclaimed the care of mothers and young children to be one of the principal obligations of the young Soviet Republic. The establishment of State protection for mothers and young children was of exceptional significance for the practical emancipation of women, since for the first time women had a real opportunity to combine work in production with the fulfilment of their obligations as mothers. On 18 December 1917, the decrees on civil marriage and divorce did away with the old law on marriage and the family, under which a woman was directly dependent on her husband.

A whole series of decrees was also issued on education. In a statement "To the Citizens of Russia", published three days after the October Revolution, it was announced that the basic aim of the Soviet Government in education was universal literacy. The declaration emphasized that genuine democracy could not be content with mere ability to read and write, and that it was essential to achieve a higher standard of education for all citizens. A uniform school system for all citizens was created, ensuring continuity between the various stages of education and eliminating educational inequality between the various strata of the population.

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"The pupil's ability", so the statement ran, "shall be the only consideration in moving him from one stage to the next."

It must be emphasized that the Soviet State did not merely proclaim the right of all citizens to education, but also guaranteed that right by assuming all the expenses for education, from the primary to the university level. The State, moreover, gave non-repayable grants to all students at higher and secondary specialized educational institutions.

A decree was issued making co-educational classes compulsory in all educational institutions. This did much to eliminate the age-old inequality of women in the sphere of education. Co-educational classes ensured that women would have a real chance of receiving an education equal to men's in range and level and this, in turn, was a basis for the creation of equal opportunities for women to move on to secondary and higher educational establishments and thus to be able to specialize and improve their qualifications on an equal footing with men. Co-education also helped to eradicate the old prejudices about women's "inferiority", in all matters of education.

Although the decree on co-educational classes applied to all educational institutions in the country, the Soviet Government, taking into account not only the grave discrimination which had been practised against women in Tsarist times in regard to their access to higher education but also the strong social prejudices (to which, incidentally, certain professors and university teachers were liable at the time), considered it necessary to lay special emphasis on the equality of men and women and to make it a criminal offence to violate women's right to undertake higher studies. A decree of 2 August 1918 stated: "All higher educational institutions of the Republic, pursuant to the decree making co-educational classes compulsory in all higher educational institutions, are open to all, without distinction of sex. Persons responsible for infringing this decree will be subject to prosecution before the Revolutionary Tribunal."

Subsequently, other actions to prevent women from exercising their rights in practice were made criminal offences. Article 134 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR reads: "Preventing a woman from taking part in State, public of cultural activity, thereby violating the principle of equal rights for women, if it is combined with force or the threat of force, is punishable by imprisonment for up to two years or corrective labour for up to one year."

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It would seem that in such circumstances women should very soon have occupied a position of equality with men. However, it was very long before what had been proclaimed and even enacted in law actually became so in practice. Women had been in a position of inferiority too long to be able, upon receiving full rights and corresponding guarantees, to exercise them at once with ease. Countless obstacles still stood in the way of women's equality.

The author's aim is not so much to describe the present position of Soviet women but to give some idea of how it was achieved - with the aid of what means and in the face of what difficulties.

The scope of this report does not, unfortunately, permit even an outline of the gigantic work accomplished by the Soviet Government.

While realizing that to assign priorities among the methods or combination of methods of dealing with the question of women's rights is a complicated and in many ways controversial business, the author nevertheless believes that it will hardly be necessary to defend the argument that a sufficiently high level of general education for women is a powerful weapon in their struggle for real equality in society. That is why we shall concentrate here on the question of women's education. The subject is of immediate interest: there are still over 700 million people in the world who do not know how to read and write, and the majority of them are women. The USSR's experience, moreover, can be put to use more easily, simply and effectively in this area than in any other by countries which now confront the same or similar problems as the USSR did fifty years ago.

The specific characteristics of the society in which it is attempted to raise women's educational level are of great significance. The best practical experience, well-tried procedures, a fully developed methodology can prove not only ineffective but actually harmful if applied in a society with different national customs, religious beliefs and ways of life. The author therefore deals separately with the eradication of illiteracy among women in the central Republics of the USSR on the one hand and in the central Asian and Transcaucasian Republics on the other, where the characteristics referred to were a major factor in the long and tenacious struggle of the Soviet State to guarantee the equality of women.

II. Eradication of illiteracy among women in the central Republics of the USSR

As we said before, Tsarist Russia bequeathed to the Soviet State an extremely low level of education among the population as a whole: nearly three quarters of the population were illiterate. Eighty-four per cent of the women between the ages of nine and forty-nine did not have ever [illegible]e rudiments of literacy, and only 0.8 per cent had received an education higher than primary.

1. The first steps taken by the Soviet State to wipe out illiteracy. From the outset, the Soviet State set about wiping out illiteracy among adults, considering this one of the mo[illegible]rtant needs of the day. Within three days of the revolution, the Soviet G[illegible]ment issued an appeal to the adult population to participate actively in the literacy campaign and guaranteed every assistance in this endeavour.

A special section was created in the Ministry of Education (which at the time was known as the People's Commissariat) with the task of helping the adult population in every way to raise their level of education and, first of all, to eliminate illiteracy or semi-literacy.

This cultural and educational action soon took on broad dimensions; groups, courses, "people's universities", workers' clubs, etc., were set up all over the country. Lectures were organized on the most varied themes. In every enterprise and institution public libraries were established with books especially collected for the purpose.

However, it was soon apparent that the members of all these groups and the audiences at the lectures were mainly men; lectures, even in their most popular form, were not really comprehensible to illiterate women, and for the same reason they could not make use of the libraries. Literacy schools were attended only by the more alert women, whom it was scarcely necessary to convince of the usefulness of education or to provide with special facilities.

In order to attract adult women, burdened with families, children and domestic responsibilities, to school, a vast propaganda campaign had to be conducted among both the women and their husbands, who often prevented their wives from studying, not recognizing the usefulness of literacy for women. Schools had to be established not only in factories or district clubs but actually in houses,

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apartments and hostels. This required an enormous number of teachers, and there were in fact very few of them. Women's living conditions had to be improved, they had to be freed at least partially from endless domestic work and arrangements had to be made to look after their children while they were at school.

To grasp the full difficulty of the problem, we have to imagine the situation at the time. The years of world war had completely ruined the country. A great part of the industrial undertakings had come to a halt through lack of fuel and raw materials. A civil war was raging, and a war with eighteen foreign countries, which were engaged in armed intervention against the new Soviet State.

To persuade illiterate women of the need for education under such dreadful conditions of hunger, unemployment and devastation, it was necessary really to understand their needs and to have great organizing ability. It was necessary to go to factories, to hostels, to kitchens and laundries, into the villages, into every house, and by talking to them personally literally win over the future students of the schools of literacy, explaining to them the reasons for the current difficulties and convincing them of the need to begin their studies immediately. In such circumstances, the best propagandists and teachers were the most literate workers, men and women. But of these there were few. Moreover, the best brains of the factory and works committees were busied with the difficult problems of directing and organizing production and supplying the country with raw materials, fuel and food.

It was not possible in the circumstances to confine oneself to opening schools of literacy and teaching those who volunteered to attend. Such an approach threatened to prolong the task of wiping out illiteracy for many years. The situation demanded the urgent mobilization of all the country's cultural forces for the struggle against illiteracy, a struggle which had to be waged like a general offensive. That is in fact what was done.

2. Legislative and administrative measures to further the literacy campaign among women. The Government virtually took over the literacy campaign for adults. In the first place, a number of decress were issued making it compulsory for all Soviet, Party, trade union and economic organizations to take a fully active part in the campaign to wipe out illiteracy and to seek ways and means of creating

conditions for schooling. These legislative measures were of particular significance for women. For example, the decree of 26 December 1919 cut the working day by two hours, with full pay, for those who studied. This was particularly important for women workers who had domestic responsibilities at home in addition to their work in production. The decree introduced compulsory schooling for all illiterate persons, which made administrative, Party, trade union and economic organs seek ways and means of ensuring satisfactory facilities for the education of women. The decree empowered the Ministry of Education to enlist all literate persons in the country in the task of teaching the illiterate "as a form of national service". The decree also made it a criminal offence to hinder illiterate women from attending school. It was of particular importance for women that the State bore all the expense of organizing the schooling, including free school supplies and writing materials.

The Government continued to devote constant attention to the literacy campaign. The problems involved in the education of adults were constantly discussed at meetings of the higher organs of State power. It was realized that the problem of eradicating illiteracy was in the first place a problem concerning women. Hence the literacy campaign had to be closely co-ordinated with the struggle for the improvement of women's material position and for new living conditions, in order to give women time to study.

To centralize the direction of the adult literacy campaign, the Government created an Extraordinary Commission under the All-Russian Ministry of Education with broad powers. Similar commissions, operating on a voluntary basis, were established in all departments of national education. Tens of thousands of volunteers, especially women activists, took part in the work.

One of the most important tasks of the commissions was to find and train teachers.

3. Solution of the problem of teaching staff. There were not enough qualified teachers in the country because in Tsarist Russia the general education system had been little developed. As was pointed out before, under the government decree all school teachers, and all educated persons, were enlisted in the adult literacy programmes as a form of national service. But since educated persons were also few in number, special accelerated courses were established to train literacy

teachers, or as they were called at the time, "illiteracy liquidators". By 1920 there were already more than 8,000 such courses. Soon supporting training schools were organized which accumulated and spread knowledge of the best methods of adult education, thereby helping the rapidly trained teachers in their difficult task.

It should be pointed out that in wiping out illiteracy the problem of teaching staff is the main one for all countries with a low level of general education. For lack of teachers, many countries in our own day put off an active literacy campaign until better times, that is until a body of teachers has been created. The experience of the Soviet Union has shown that when the population is prejudiced, poor and illiterate, not just qualified teachers and highly educated intellectuals, but also people with a little general education can be highly successful both in bringing the illiterate into the schools and in teaching them once they are there. It was these persons who had just emerged from illiteracy or semi-literacy, realizing from their own experience the value of literacy and knowing and understanding the needs of the illiterate, who could most readily find arguments to persuade women loaded with work and family responsibilities to pick up a book. It was they who discovered the best methods of teaching and often achieved the best results. In one of its decrees dealing especially with female literacy, the Government proposed to the Extraordinary Commission that this experience should be taken into account in training "liquidators of illiteracy".

4. Methods used to attract women to literacy schools. One of the most difficult problems was to induce women to come to school. In the first years, this was dealt with basically only by the women's committees formed by the Government immediately after the Revolution for special work among women. But since the members of these Committees were themselves illiterate, they were unable to handle the problem. Later, however, together with the workers of the Extraordinary Commissions, they did extensive propaganda for education, using the most varied methods.

In clubs, recreation and reading rooms and hostels, lectures were given on such themes as "What is the use of literacy for women?", "The significance of the eradication of illiteracy for raising the level of skill among women workers", etc. Notices and slogans were put up everywhere: "It's never too late to shake off the shame of illiteracy!", "Illiteracy is three times greater among women than among

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men, and three times as many women should be in school!", "The first place in the literacy school is for women!", "Only a literate mother can give her child proper support!"

In the pages of popular women's papers - "The Woman Worker", "The Peasant Woman" and others - eminent scholars and writers explained the importance of literacy for women in simple and suitable language. In these papers, as in special "illiteracy corners" and "women workers' pages" included in national and local newspapers, women who had recently learned to read and write discussed the merits of literacy. Concerts, festivals, pageants, and amusing dramatizations of trials of persons who did not want to go to school were organized; on such days, thousands of women would usually register in the literacy schools.

5. Combating prejudice against education for women. At the same time, a major information campaign was conducted among the male population. Trade union organizations constantly discussed the question of the "struggle against the narrow-minded view of women's role in society" and adopted decisions "to assist male workers to overcome deep-rooted prejudices concerning women". Lectures were given and discussions took place concerning the participation of women in the revolutionary movement and in social production and concerning their exceptionally important role in the raising of children. Women activists conducted individual discussions with men who did not let their wives attend school, and in an overwhelming majority of cases persuaded them of the need to reconsider their attitude. As we said earlier, a special law provided that anyone maliciously obstructing the enrolment of women in school was liable to criminal prosecution.

6. Measures to improve conditions of daily life. A great deal was done to improve conditions of daily life for women. Communal dining rooms, laundries, kindergartens and nurseries were established. As early as 1920 a quarter of a million children were registered in State-controlled pre-school institutions. By 1934, there were over 1.5 million. In addition, at the times when women were attending classes, special children's rooms were organized in clubs and recreation and reading rooms, where women activists from the Komsomol, the Communist youth organization, played with the children and read to them, and also cared for the very young children. The trade unions gave women great assistance in their studies.

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In those first difficult years, hot lunches were provided for women students in many towns, and special grants of material assistance were made where necessary. As industry developed and the trade unions established themselves, they devoted more and more attention to the education of women. In 1928, the amount spent on wiping out illiteracy was 1.5 million roubles; in 1929, over 6 million; in 1930, 11 million; in 1931 14 million; in 1932, 17 million; in 1934, 26 million; in 1935, 41 million - huge sums, when the then existing price levels are taken into account.

The question of literacy teaching was never off the agenda of the plenums of the central committees of the trade unions. Any slackness by factory and works committees in wiping out illiteracy among the workers was roundly condemned. In order to induce the managements of textile undertakings to organize classes, illiteracy being particularly high there since women workers were in the majority, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Textile Workers' Union placed the responsibility for eradicating illiteracy among the workers on the administrative organs and directors of such undertakings. As a method of ensuring greater personal responsibility, the Plenum proposed to the Presidium of the Central Committee and to the regional sections of the Union that in evaluating the work of an administrator or considering his promotion to some post, his attitude to the literacy campaign and his own participation in it should be taken into account.

The plenums of the trade unions discussed and decided on practical steps to create the necessary conditions for women's schooling. In addition to the State kindergartens, trade unions began to organize their own kindergartens and nurseries at plants, their aim being to make such facilities available to all women who desired to take advantage of them.

Literally every detail was taken into consideration to facilitate women's study. For example, the place and time of the literacy classes were adapted as far as possible to the women's routine of working and living. Among the various advantages offered to women who were going to school were priority at polyclinics, free rides on municipal transport, etc.

... Extensive propaganda, a campaign against inertia and the creation of better conditions in daily life - all this helped produce a situation where millions of adult women, and often quite elderly women, sat down at their desks to learn.

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7. Some problems directly connected with the teaching of literacy to adult women. But to get women into the classrooms was only half the battle. It was no less difficult to keep them there to the end of the course.

In the first place, women - especially the older ones - were very doubtful about their ability to learn to read and write. It was therefore necessary constantly to keep up their interest in education and to help them make at least a little progress every day. Secondly, they wanted to see practical results of their studies immediately and to have a chance to apply the knowledge they received at school in their everyday lives, and also to find answers to the questions that interested them. Thirdly, it became obvious that a curriculum designed for children was not really effective for teaching grown women. It was therefore recommended that literacy teaching for women should be related as closely as possible to their lives; even simple addition should be taught, not abstractly, but with the aid of examples of domestic expenses. Study should be accompanied by political talks, which would arouse women's interest in reading the newspapers. Experience also showed that teaching was more successful where age disparities were taken into account in forming classes; older women did not want to study side by side with young people, being embarrassed by their age.

It was stated at an international seminar that the literacy campaign conducted by UNESCO in Africa had been unsuccessful because of a so-called relapse into illiteracy. The problem was one which faced the USSR in those early days. Women who had somehow learned their letters were not capable of maintaining their knowledge at even a minimum level by reading ordinary books. Such books were too difficult for them to read. After a few unsuccessful attempts, they would lose interest and return to illiteracy. A solution was found when a special literature was published for the semi-literate, a whole series of new books, pamphlets, newspapers and periodicals, distinguished by clear characters, attractive presentation and subjects of interest for this category of women.

As the economic capacity of the country grew and the number of educated people rose, the short literacy classes turned into permanent evening schools, providing instruction for those who attended them corresponding to the primary school level. This not only prevented a relapse into illiteracy but also gave participants a chance to continue their studies within the general system of education.

8. Methods adopted in the concluding phase of the literacy campaign. The experience of the first years of the campaign to wipe out illiteracy showed that the best results were achieved where the greatest numbers of people took part both in the organization and in the conduct of the studies. As soon as the number of sufficiently literate and educated persons had reached a certain level, a so-called cultural drive was proclaimed for the completion of the whole campaign against illiteracy. Hundreds of thousands of persons took part in it. Those involved in the drive - organizers, teachers, propagandists and so on - joined in a movement especially created for this purpose and called "Down with illiteracy!" The Head of State was the head of the movement. The selection of the Head of State as the chairman of the movement for wiping out illiteracy was not accidental. It was regarded as having special significance and symbolic of the fact that in a country governed by the power of workers and peasants there could not be and soon would not be a single illiterate worker or peasant.

In view of the fact that the majority of those who remained illiterate were women, the "Down with illiteracy" movement concentrated its efforts on them. Women were members of the movement and in fact played a most active part in completing the process of eradicating illiteracy.

In those years there emerged many new and interesting forms and methods of action. Characteristic new kinds of competition developed; for a "literate factory" a "literate village", etc. The number of those who doubted their ability to learn to read and write grew steadily less.

In this phase, the enthusiasm of the students clearly exceeded the economic capacities of the country, which were still limited. Not infrequently, a single pencil had to be shared among three or even five students. If there was no paper, they wrote on old newspapers. In place of ink, they boiled a dark infusion from grass. If there were not enough blackboards, the white walls of cottages were used and whitewashed again after each lesson. Women displayed impatience with illiteracy and made greater demands upon themselves as regards their own education. Many of them were no longer satisfied with mere literacy and demanded the establishment of special adult schools offering primary and even a partial secondary education. Such schools were subsequently provided.

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By the late 1930's, illiteracy had been completely eliminated among the urban population and all but eliminated among the agricultural population of the central Republics. In the country as a whole, however, according to the 1939 census, the total percentage of literacy was 87.4 per cent, against 81.6 per cent for women alone. This substantial percentage of illiteracy mainly reflected the situation in the Republics of Central Asia and Transcaucasia, where the process of eradicating illiteracy had been rendered more difficult and slower by the special circumstances existing in those regions (to which reference will be made in the following section). Subsequent planned action for the education of the adult population, the development of an extensive network of night schools and the implementation of the law on compulsory schooling for children soon turned the Soviet Union into a country where literacy is universal.

III. Eradication of illiteracy among women in the Central Asian and Transcaucasian Republics

The process of overcoming cultural backwardness and illiteracy among the women of the national Republics of Central Asia and Transcaucasia was marked by many special features and accompanied by great additional difficulties, necessitating the adoption of special forms and methods of action. This experience constitutes a chapter by itself in the history of women's rights in the USSR.

The combination of oppression by feudal landowners, to which the border populations of Tsarist Russia had been subjected for centuries, and the policy of the Tsarist Government with respect to national minorities, had kept the peoples of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the Volga region and Transcaucasia at a low level of cultural development. The population was wholly illiterate. In Uzbekistan, 97 per cent of the population was illiterate, in Kirghizistan, 98 per cent, in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, 99.5 per cent. The situation in the Caucasus was not much better.

The Tsarist autocracy did everything to prevent the educational development of the non-Russian peoples. In Turkestan, for example, expenditures for all educational purposes in 1913 amounted to only 2.3 per cent of the budget, while expenditures for the maintenance of the police and army amounted to 86.7 per cent. In 1910, the journal "Vestnik vospitaniya", assessing the prospects for improving

literacy in Russia, estimated that at the rate of progress then prevailing it would take at least 4,900 years to eradicate illiteracy among the peoples of Central Asia.

1. The first steps taken by the Soviet authorities. Cultural reform in those Republics had to start literally from scratch: there were no schools, no teachers, no pupils, no established educational system.

From the first days of the Revolution, the Soviet authorities turned their attention most seriously to the education of the formerly oppressed nationalities. A government order was issued to the effect that the national minorities should be helped to catch up culturally with central Russia in the shortest possible time. To that end, a press, schools, theatres and cultural and educational institutions were to be established in the native tongue, in the first instance for the peoples of Kirghizistan, Bashkiria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Tataria and Daghestan; an extensive system of general and vocational courses and schools for adults was to be established and developed in order to speed up the training of local skilled personnel and organizers in all branches of administration, especially in the sphere of education.

In 1919, a section for national minorities was set up under the Special All-Russian Commission for the Eradication of Illiteracy, to direct the teaching of literacy to the adult population of the national Republics. In the Republics themselves, government committees were set up to combat illiteracy.

These agencies set to work immediately. Courses were initiated in Moscow, and by 1920 had already turned out fifty-six organizers of national education for fourteen nationalities. In the same year Turkestan already had 300 trained organizers and 640 teachers, all drawn from the local population, and by the beginning of 1921, in Turkestan alone, 3,000 persons were attending teacher-training courses. Similar courses were established in all the other Republics. By the end of 1920, the section for national minorities had printed tens of thousands of wall alphabets and the first primers had been published: 70,000 in the Uzbek language, 50,000 in the Kirghiz language and 30,000 in the Turkmen language.

Alongside the eradication of illiteracy, great attention was paid to other forms of education in these Republics. The number of primary and secondary

schools, training courses of various kinds and technical schools rapidly increased and institutes of higher education were established. As early as 1918, despite the difficulties of civil war and the fight against counter-revolutionary banditry, 400 schools were organized, and in the 1921-1922 school year 25 per cent of the children were already attending school. By 1920, twenty vocational technical schools were in operation in Uzbekistan, as well as eleven courses for training key technical workers from the local population and seven schools and technical institutes for the training of medical and health-service personnel, with an enrolment of 3,000 students. In September 1920, a Turkestan university was established at Tashkent - the first institution of higher learning in Soviet Central Asia. More than 200 professors and as many lecturers and assistant lecturers from the University of Moscow went to Tashkent. Soon another institution of higher education was founded, the University of Central Asia.

2. Difficulties arising out of local conditions. Women, however, were hardly touched by these first cultural reforms, because of the oppressed condition of the female population of these nations before the Revolution.

Although female labour had been used more extensively than male before the Revolution (women bore the burden of the entire economy: they worked in the fields, looked after the livestock, cared for the family; with their own hands they made the family's shoes and clothing, prepared the food and made articles for the market, such as carpets, silk and cotton textiles, embroidered goods and so forth), women were denied all political, economic and social rights. The despotic, feudal attitude to women was legalized by an economic structure based on exploitation and hallowed by age-old customs. All this could not be wiped out merely by passing laws. Consequently, although Soviet law placed men and women on a footing of equality in all spheres of political, economic and social life, the prejudices nourished for centuries made it impossible for the population to consider women as equal members of society. Despite severe sanctions enacted by Soviet legislation, the practice of selling women, abducting them or marrying them off as minors persisted in secret. The traditions governing women's lives were much too alive among the population, and if a woman tried to achieve personal freedom, to participate in the life and work of society or to get an education, this was regarded as infringing the rights of the male owner and as undermining the foundations of the social order.

In the years immediately following the Revolution, opposition to the liberation of women from the fetters of ancient laws and customs was often accompanied by open terrorism on the part of the most reactionary elements in society.

The question of equal rights for women was one of the main issues in the class war which developed in the outlying republics of Central Asia after the Revolution. Reactionary elements actively campaigned against the measures taken by the Government for the emancipation of women, breaking up women's meetings and conferences, spreading slanders about the Soviet Government's intentions concerning women and discrediting women activists in the eyes of the population. Realizing the importance of literacy for the emancipation of women, the enemies of Soviet policy took special pains to oppose women's education. The view was circulated that for women to attend literacy schools or for girls to go to school was a great sin, the education of women allegedly violating the teachings of the Koran.

The education of women in these Republics was rendered even more difficult because all the work, both organizational and educational, had to be done solely by women. Yet it was hard, in those days, to find even a few trained Russian women, let alone local ones. Scores of trained women volunteers were sent from Moscow to all the Republics, to staff the bodies working among the female population. But to eradicate illiteracy among millions of women, not scores, but hundreds of thousands of women were needed as organizers, cultural workers, medical workers and, of course, teachers. The problem of recruiting these people was a chronic one.

The battle for the enlightenment of the women of Central Asia and Transcaucasia took place in two distinct stages as regards forms and methods as well as intensity. The first stage was one of preparing the material basis for wiping out illiteracy and of training local teachers, especially women. At the same time, there was a first attempt to find ways and means of approaching the "oriental female recluse", of attracting women to school. The second stage was a broad movement to bring women into social production, This was seen as an essential prerequisite for ensuring their economic independence. It was also a period of active offensive against the old ways, that is, a period of mass eradication of illiteracy among the women of the eastern Republics.

In a series of legislative and normative instruments it was emphasized that the question of the general emancipation of working women was one of the basic problems for "the development of the eastern provinces of the country", and a variety of measures was adopted to promote women's participation in culture and the life of society.

In its battle for the enlightenment of the women of Central Asia, the Soviet State combined extensive explanatory work with constraint against those who maliciously opposed female emancipation and encouragement of those who worked for the education of women.

The special problems of the eastern Republics were reflected in their Constitutions, which contained articles making it punishable by law in general to oppose the practical emancipation of women and in particular to try and keep them away from education. Article 121 of the Constitution of the Uzbek SSR lays down that: "Opposition to the genuine emancipation of women (marriage of minors, bride price, organizing opposition to the involvement of women in education, agriculture and industry, government and social and political affairs) shall be punishable by law." A similar provision is included in the Constitutions of the other Central Asian Republics: in article 93 of the Constitution of the Kirghiz SSR, in article 109 of that of the Tadzhik SSR, in article 99 of that of the Turkmen SSR and in article 99 of that of the Kazakh SSR Constitution. The criminal codes of the Central Asian Republics are more severe than those of the other Union Republics in their sanctions against persons opposing the practical emancipation of women. Thus, in contrast to article 134 of the RSFSR criminal code, article 120 of the Kazakh SSR criminal code makes punishable any action violating women's equality, not merely by the use of force or threat, but also in cases where advantage is taken of material or other dependence.

Penalties were repeatedly provided in a number of other laws and decrees of the Soviet State concerning the education of women. Thus the law concerning general primary education provided that parents and other persons would be held responsible if children, especially girls, were not allowed to attend school.

At the same time, the State created a whole series of stimuli encouraging women to study. The Government of the Turkestan Republic issued a decree exempting peasants from agricultural taxes if they sent their daughters to school or did

not prevent their wives from attending literacy classes. Moreover, in order to attract backward peasants to study, it was decreed that literate persons would have certain advantages in obtaining loans. A peasant became eligible for this privilege, not only if he was himself literate, but also if his wife or daughter were literate. The decree stated that every peasant who was a member of an agricultural association and who presented certification from the educational authorities that he or his wife or daughter had completed a full six-month literacy course was entitled to priority in obtaining a loan. This provision not only promoted the education of women, but also enhanced their position in the eyes of men.

Nevertheless, although the Soviet State from its inception gave women every support and assistance in acquiring culture, the way of life in these Republics, and particularly the practice of seclusion, made it impossible for women to take advantage of the right to education offered them and to attend the ordinary schools and literacy classes. The solution was to create special schools for women, centres for eradicating illiteracy open exclusively to women and staffed by women teachers. But it was not easy to get the women even into these schools. It was not so much that custom forbade a woman to take up a book, that her family was contemptuous about her schooling or that disobedience laid her open to persecution and punishment, as that the women themselves did not see the point of literacy. Through centuries of living in seclusion, women had come to look upon their position in the family and their isolation from society as something foreordained and established for all time, while propaganda in favour of education was frequently regarded as undermining the moral structure of the family. The first necessity, therefore, was to find the right approach to women, to win their trust and only then to explain the importance and demonstrate the necessity of knowledge.

It was necessary to proceed very carefully, to show exceptional tact and ability to understand and take account of the tenacity of national customs and prejudices, so as not to offend women's religious and national feelings.

As was explained earlier, there were at first no competent local women to do the work involved and it all had to be done by volunteers sent out from Moscow. The population, especially the rural population inspired by reactionary and

fanatically inclined elements, sometimes met them with hostility. They had to adapt to local conditions. In order to win the people's confidence, some of these volunteers - Russian women - had to wear veils, stay indoors at night, and so forth, to show that no one was attacking local customs and religion, but that they were simply trying to teach women to read and write, to raise their cultural level and so on. Hostile elements spread false, malicious rumours about the women from Russia, undermining their authority, and the husbands forbade their wives to talk to them. The workers on the women's committees had to use all kinds of methods to gain the local women's confidence. They showed the local women how to use soap, which was unknown in many places, gave medical care to the children, showed how an old dress could be made "as good as new" by washing and ironing. In this way, step by step, they won the confidence of the local women and gradually started introducing them to civilized standards of living, and then to the rudiments of literacy.

The efforts of the women's committees gradually began to bear fruit. The women began to see the point of the rights offered them by the Soviet authorities. Realizing the connexion between literacy and their emancipation from their former shackles, they studied assiduously, much harder than the men, touchingly happy every time they learnt a new letter and made fresh progress.

The Soviet authorities carefully tended these first shoots of consciousness and self-respect and in every way supported the women's efforts to continue their education. It was these women who gradually became the organizers of work among women, the teachers, doctors and lawyers so greatly needed by the rising Central Asian Republics.

3. How the problem of recruiting women teachers was solved. Because of the local ways of life, one of the most serious problems in educating the female population, as has already been pointed out, was the training of women organizers and teachers from the local populations. As early as 1918-1919, special courses and schools were established in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities to train people for key work in the national Republics. In Moscow special ten-month courses were organized for women at the University for Eastern Workers, which was wholly supported out of State funds. Similar courses and departments were established in other institutes of higher education in the capital. In view of the acute need

for trained women to work in the Republics the State offered substantial advantages to persons attending these courses. All the costs of their studies and living expenses were borne by the state budget.

Nevertheless, illiteracy and, especially, the secluded way of life of the eastern women presented serious obstacles to their attending courses. A completely new type of secondary and higher educational establishment, exclusively for women, was needed. Such establishments were created.

Their organization was accompanied by great difficulties. In the first place, the syllabuses were overloaded, since women were accepted in these institutions without any prior preparation and it was necessary to begin with the rudiments of literacy. Secondly, the women students had to be ensured real isolation from men, to avoid introducing too sharp a contrast with traditional ways and exposing participants to the danger of reprisals on their return to their homes. Thirdly, professional training for women in these Republics, as teachers, doctors, midwives, lawyers, was much more expensive than similar training for either sex in the central provinces. Given the conditions in central Asia, a woman who left home to attend school in one of the towns usually had to break with her family, and abandon the old ways. In order to be able to study, she had to be provided with all the necessary conditions. In other words, she became fully dependent on the State, which had to provide her with living quarters, find nursery, kindergarten or boarding school accommodation for her children and provide all their clothing, food, and so forth.

Notwithstanding the financial difficulties of the first decade after the Revolution, the Soviet State found the necessary resources, for the importance of creating a national female intelligentsia could hardly be overestimated. As early as 1919 the first women's teacher training college of the type described above was opened in Tashkent, and three women's teacher training schools were established in Azerbaijan. In 1925, there were fourteen various women's educational establishments of various kinds in Uzbekistan. At the same time, as ground was gained in the fight against the old ways, women began to enter the ordinary colleges and technical schools, although even then it was still necessary to provide special sections for them in these institutions.

Although, understandably, these first women specialists were not very highly qualified, they played an enormous part in the subsequent work of female emancipation. They became better propagandists for the new kind of life and demonstrated by their own example what woman could achieve under Soviet rule; and, of course these local women were able to achieve much greater success with their own compatriots than could people coming in from outside.

4. Women's clubs as a method of approach in the first phase. It must be noted that for many of these pioneer women the fact of learning to read and write, not to speak of learning a profession, cost them a complete break with their families. Some were driven out of their native villages; others, as a sign of protest, left of their own accord. Not every woman, particularly those with small children, was capable of such a step. Consequently some means had to be found of organizing women's education whereby, on the one hand, any sharp conflict with traditional ways of life (seclusion, for example) would be avoided, while, on the other hand, women's interest and attention would be aroused. Such a means was found in the women's club, under its various local names /"women's yurt", peasant women's centre" (dom dekkhanki) and so forth/.

The advantage of women's clubs lay not only in the fact that they were inaccessible to men and that women, used to seclusion, could feel equally at home in them as in the women's quarters to which they were accustomed. These clubs provided outpatient clinics and child welfare consultations as well as legal advice to help women defend their rights. Here very simple workshops and the first producers' associations (artely) were organized, where women could not only receive vocational training but also earn a little, a prospect which particularly attracted them to the club; and in these clubs women were cautiously introduced to literacy.

The first women's club was established at Baku, in 1920, and was under the immediate authority of the Azerbaijanian government. One of the best buildings in the city was allocated to the club - the former mansion of a local magnate, with sixty rooms. In addition to various workshops a producers' association and an outpatient clinic, the club ran several literacy schools and training courses for women rural organizers. The club gradually became a special kind of women's training centre for key jobs. There were courses for telephone operators

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and machinists, sewing courses, a vocational technical school, co-operative courses, a school of midwifery; a group for training teachers in adult education and, of course, study circles for the eradication of illiteracy and semi-literacy as well as circles for more advanced literacy. In its fifteen years of existence, the club enjoyed immense popularity and gave not a bad education to 8,000 Azerbaijanian women.

The Azerbaijanian experience was speedily imitated by other Republics. Hundreds of clubs were established in towns and villages. They gained authority not only with women but also with men, and in many a village where the opening of a small club had been met with hostility by the men, the whole population would be enthusiastically engaged in building a big new building for the club a few months later.

In Turkmenia there was virtually no urban population and it was necessary to work with a rural population scattered in small mutually remote villages. Consequently a "dehkhane house" or peasant women's house was established in Ashkhabad for the convenience of visitors. Every Turkmen woman was entitled to spend two to three weeks there. She could learn a great deal in that time. There was a women's and children's clinic; there were baths, a sewing workshop and a school. The women were taught how to change and wash a baby and how to wash clothes, and became accustomed to the elementary rules of hygiene. Doctors were in attendance to give expert assistance where needed. The "dom dekkhanki" soon achieved popularity among the women. In the first three months, 2,078 persons visited the house, mainly women with children. Then literacy schools were started and training courses designed for a longer term of stay, for women who were prepared to take an active part in the movement. A women's hostel was organized and nurseries for their children. Both the women students and, of course, their children, were maintained entirely at government expense.

In order to reach the women of the nomad peoples, a mobile service using (yurts) tents or covered carts (kibitki) was organized. At first these were used only for the literacy campaign and those in the field soon realized that to gain authority with the women they must begin with more practical things. Sewing machines, separators, handmills and churns soon began to appear in the "women's yurt", and these were what interested the women most. In addition to the women organizers, the travelling staff included a medical nurse, a midwife and a lawyer.

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But, as in the past, it was still extremely difficult to make propaganda for literacy effective and to force the women to learn their alphabet. In order to find a way to the minds and hearts of the nomad women and to support the arguments in favour of literacy, the field workers had to take account of factors which might help awaken a desire among the women to learn to read and write; so they studied the economy and natural history of the region, the trade relations among the nomad peoples, advanced methods of animal husbandry and so forth, since only thus would educational propaganda appear to the local women to have any practical purpose. The women's yurts gradually became popular with the people and the men often complained that there were no similar facilities for them.

5. Measures for attracting girls into the schools. A literacy campaing cannot, of course, succeed unless all children are within the school system. In the special circumstances existing in the eastern Republics, compulsory education of girls presented great difficulties. The principle of co-education introduced by the Soviet authorities had a profound social significance, particularly for the women of those peoples. It was bound to, and later did, play a great part in eradicating traditional feudal attitudes towards women, and it also developed in women themselves a consciousness that they were equal members of society. But, in the early years, parents flatly refused to send girls to co-educational schools. Indeed, it was not easy to persuade parents to let their daughters attend even a girls' school, and fine buildings specially constructed for the purpose often remained empty. In the towns, women teachers who had met with parental opposition would turn directly to the children. They began to play with little girls in the street, daily inventing new ways of amusing them and gradually winning the children's trust. Then they would transfer the games to the schoolyard and eventually to the classroom. There, treating it as an exciting game, they began to do needlework with them, to teach them songs and poems and, finally, gradually went on to teaching according to the curriculum. Once the parents realized that the girls were happy at school and that school was not hostile to the family, they withdrew their objections.

In the rural areas, it was sometimes necessary to spend months or even years persuading parents to let their daughters go to school. Every inducement was used, even to the point of giving girls priority in those years of shortages of school

supplies, clothes and shoes in the distribution of such articles by the national educational authorities.

The experience of the first schools showed that girls were readier to go to school and parents readier to let them go if, in addition to learning to read and write, they acquired also some more practical knowledge which, if applied, would produce speedier and more tangible results. Therefore the girls' schools taught not only the general subjects, but also the rudiments of housekeeping, needlework, the principles of music, choral singing and dancing. In the senior classes instruction was given in subjects connected with agricultural organization and practice, care of livestock and certain trades. Since the local customs prescribed that girls, from the age of nine or ten, should lead a secluded life, the state began to provide permanent accommodations for them in hostels attached to the schools. For the parents this removed the risk of their daughters' being seen by men on their way to and from school. The full cost of the girls' maintenance in those hostels was, of course, borne by the state.

Boarding schools were soon to become widespread, not only for girls but for both sexes. Because the centres of population were so widely scattered, boarding schools were practically the only means of providing a partial (seven-year) or complete secondary (ten-year) education. For girls, these schools were of particular importance: they removed the girls from the influence of their old way of life, which had prevented them from studying; moreover, since they lived in the schools at state expense, the parents could not allege financial reasons for taking them out of school. Despite their greater cost to the state, by comparison with ordinary ones, a whole network of such schools was established in the eastern Republics.

The Ministry of National Education constantly required the local authorities to do everything possible to ensure that the girls' boarding schools were better equipped than those for boys. Later, when it became possible for girls to enter mixed boarding schools, the Ministry constantly emphasized the necessity of giving priority to the needs of the girls, both by giving them better living quarters, clothing, bedding and so forth, and in regard to assistance with their studies.

A great deal was done in the co-educational schools to combat the traditional feudal attitudes towards women. Heads of boarding schools were required to take

stern measures, even to the point of expulsion, against boys who dared to adopt an arrogant or tactless attitude towards girls. They were also required to see that no complaint by girls remained unexamined. The compulsory inclusion of the girls' mothers in parent-teacher councils was also of great importance. All these measures did much to eradicate parental prejudice against boarding schools and the number of girls attending school increased steadily year by year.

6. Measures adopted in the phase of mass eradication of illiteracy among women (1927-1938). The first results both of bringing girls into the schools and of teaching grown women to read and write undoubtedly represented a great step forward, yet they were insignificant in relation to what still remained to be done. For the purpose of bringing literacy, not to thousands, but to millions of women, and in such a way as to enable those millions to continue their education, closed girls' schools and women's clubs were obviously unsuitable. The clubs, the peasant women's centres (dom dekkhanki) and especially yurts had played an enormous part in emancipating women, teaching them the elements of civilized customs and awakening backward and neglected masses. Nevertheless, however many such clubs were established, only a very small proportion of the women, representing an insignificant percentage of the female population, could avail themselves of these facilities. What was most important was to give all women the opportunity of achieving real economic independence.

In the first phase, a solution was found by organizing co-operative forms of female labour. In Turkmenistan, for example, in 1928, 16,000 women were working in carpet-making associations, while in Uzbekistan a system of consumer co-operatives brought 30,000 women into association. But what was useful in the period when women were first being aroused to a consciousness of their place in society was clearly insufficient in the period of mass extension of education for women. After the restoration of the national economy and the beginning of intensive industrial development in the national Republics, the opportunities were much greater. The most serious consideration was given to the development in the eastern Republics of those branches of industry in which female labour could be widely utilized. Under the first five-year plan, the following industries were established: in Azerbaijan, textile factories; in Georgia, textile, paper

and sugar factories; in Armenia, textile, chemical and food-processing factories and tanneries; in Turkmenistan, textile factories; in Uzbekistan, cotton, silk, spinning and weaving and paper factories.

The proportion of women employed grew rapidly. The percentage of women drawn from the local population in heavy industry by 1934 was as follows: in Uzbekistan, 42; in Turkmenistan and Tataria, 33; in Azerbaijan, 36; in Dagestan, 28. The rapid involvement of women in industrial production was of immense significance for eradicating illiteracy and raising their general level of education. It gave women economic independence and thereby made it easier for them to decide for themselves how to exercise their rights, including the right to study and to choose their occupation; and the learning process was hardened by the fact that the work itself demanded special technical skills.

As a result of the change in economic conditions, more favourable opportunities arose for wiping out illiteracy among the peasant women. In 1925-1927, a land and water reform was introduced in the central Asian Republics and did a great deal for women's emancipation; under the new law, women for the first time received the right to land and water on an equal footing with men, and thus achieved economic independence. Placing men and women on an equal footing in their rights to land and water did much to alter the psychology of the men, who for centuries had been accustomed to regard women as their inferiors. With the triumph of the collective farm system, women achieved even greater economic independence and genuine equality of status in the family and in society. The new attitude towards women was strengthened through the joint labour of men and women on an equal footing in the collective farms and through the achievements of women in this field of work, which were no less impressive than those of the men. Very soon, women began to be elected as directors of collective farms. In Uzbekistan, for example, in 1938, 800 women served as chairmen or deputy chairmen of collective farms, and 1,000 women were working as brigade members.

Agricultural technology and advanced methods of farming required of women not merely elementary literacy, but also special skills and even specialized education. The process could no longer be halted. Propaganda was no longer needed. What was needed was schools, technical institutes, colleges and universities. By that time, the country already had enough material resources to

provide all the educational facilities required. The problem of teachers was being resolved fairly satisfactorily; the existence of a considerable number of girls of the local nationalities with a seven-year or secondary education made it possible to create a whole network of women's teacher training colleges. As before, all students in women's educational institutions were fully supported by the State. It was mandatory for women's colleges and technical schools to provide free nurseries, kindergartens and boarding schools for children of school age.

The successful struggle against ignorance and prejudice made it possible to bring increasing numbers of women into the higher educational establishments and universities. Hundreds of one-year and two-year courses were established to prepare women of the different nationalities for entrance into higher education. To ensure that a sufficient quota of women reached the higher educational establishments, various advantages were offered to women: a specific number of places - from 25 to 40 per cent - was reserved for them; it was officially announced that examiners were to apply lower standards for women in the entrance examinations; and women were to receive additional grants in excess of those available to all students. The existence of a sufficient number of qualified local teachers made it possible in turn to establish literacy schools for adults in every hamlet.

Experience showed, however, that women still needed constant help and consideration. In February 1928, an all-union commission for the improvement of working and living conditions for women was set up by the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR and similar commissions were set up in all the Republics. Their terms of reference included promoting the implementation of all Soviet legislation in any way affecting the interests of women, assisting to draw women into production, maternity and child protection, raising the cultural and general educational level of women, bringing women into the schools and promoting cultural and vocational training among women. The commissions had large funds at their disposal and were given wide powers. When, for example, the first five-year plan was established, the USSR State Planning Committee, on the proposal of the commission, made a careful study of the question of the "life and labour of women in the eastern USSR". Then the commission received the report of the State Planning Committee on "the execution and organization of action in relation to

female labour in the five-year national economic development plans of the national Republics and provinces". The commission was not satisfied with the draft plan and proposed that it be revised on the grounds that it was essential to provide specific measures for extending the use of female labour in industry. It also recommended that more extensive training of skilled women workers be provided. On the commission's recommendation, the Government issued an order requiring the State Planning Committee and the planning authorities of the Republics to make a specific study of the question of female labour under the five-year plan. This was done.

The all-union commission regularly received reports from all the Ministers of Education of the Republics on the progress of educational work among women and made its recommendations. On the commission's proposal the Central Executive Committee of the USSR suggested to the governments of the Republics that in working out their national educational plans they treat the question of women's education as a separate subject.

All these measures for improving the position of women created the necessary foundation for a successful offensive against the old ways and for the organization of a mass campaign for the eradication of illiteracy among women. In this phase, the women themselves took the initiative. They insistently demanded of the Communist Party, Soviet and trade union organizations that special attention should be paid to this matter. They strenuously asserted women's interests everywhere, from the village councils to the highest organs of government. It was this widespread participation of the women themselves in the eradication of illiteracy that ensured the campaign's success. In the 1930's the work took on tremendous proportions. In the six years from 1922 to 1928, 10,000 women received an education in Azerbaijan. In 1930 the number was 85,500, in 1931, 158,000. In Uzbekistan, in 1927, only 4,000 women had achieved literacy; in 1931, 66,000. For the period 1927-1939, the number of literate adults reached as follows: 2.5 million in Azerbaijan, 5.5 million in Uzbekistan and 2.7 million in Kasahstan. Of these, 40 per cent were women. The 1939 census showed that illiteracy among the women of those national Republics was less than one quarter; among men, it was between 8 and 15 per cent. No country has to this day achieved such a high reduction of female illiteracy.

The experience of central Asia, Kazakstan and Transcaucasia in this matter belies the theory that economically and culturally under-developed countries are not able to achieve rapid cultural advance. The further raising of the general level of women's education in these republics was helped by the ensuing development of the socialist state. In the next two decades despite the difficulties caused by the war, great progress was made in this area of education. According to the 1959 census, 97.8 per cent of women were literate by that date. Subsequent efforts have further transformed these republics into regions of solid, 100 per cent literacy. Since the war any differences in educational level between the sexes have practically disappeared. The following are the percentages of women graduates from universities, institutes and technical colleges:

Kazakh SSR	50 per cent
Kirghiz SSR	48 per cent
Turkmenian SSR	45 per cent
Azerbaijan SSR	45 per cent
Tajik SSR	41 per cent

The percentage of women receiving higher education in the eastern Soviet republics is almost the highest in the world.

Their high cultural and general educational level has given women the opportunity to take an equal place with men in all fields of economic, political and cultural life in these Republics.

At present the percentage of women deputies in the supreme organs of power in these Republics is as follows:

Turkmenian SSR	35.1 per cent
Kirghiz SSR	34.8 per cent
Azerbaijan SSR	33.7 per cent
Kazakh SSR	33.4 per cent
Tajik SSR	33.0 per cent
Uzbek SSR	31.7 per cent

In local government in these republics women constitute 40-43 per cent of all deputies.

Women deputies do not merely participate in the sessions of the Soviets but also occupy responsible positions. Many of them are members of the Supreme Soviets of the Union and of the Autonomous Republics. In Uzbekistan, for example, a country where fifty years ago a women had no right to sit at the same table with a man, the present head of the government is a woman, Jadgar Sadikovna Nasriddinova.

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She is also a deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Republic has six women ministers or deputy ministers. The Legal Commission of the Uzbek Council of Ministers is also headed by a woman.

Similarly, women are playing a similarly active part in the other Union and Autonomous Republics. The following are the percentages of women among persons with higher and secondary specialized education:

Kazakh SSR	55 per cent
Kirghiz SSR	52 per cent
Uzbek SSR	45 per cent
Turkmenian SSR	45 per cent
Azerbaijan SSR	43 per cent
Tajik SSR	42 per cent

In the sphere of public health and education there are more women than men. The percentages of women doctors are as follows:

Kazakh SSR	75 per cent
Azerbaijan SSR	67 per cent
Uzbek SSR	65 per cent
Kirghiz SSR	67 per cent
Tajik SSR	64 per cent
Turkmenian SSR	64 per cent

The experience of the eastern Soviet Republics thus shows that it is possible to overcome backwardness and put an end to the inequality of women in society within a single generation.

In concluding this brief review of the activities of the Soviet State in solving the problem of sex equality, the author considers it essential to stress that the basic reasons for this success are rooted in the very nature of the socialist structure.

The socialist state excludes all forms of exploitation. Consequently, it can have no interest in the oppression of women. It is interested, on the contrary, in her complete liberation from the shackles of the past; in enabling her to blossom as an individual, freely and effectively developing all her capacities, since the further progress of the socialist state is directly dependent on the creative activity of its citizens, both men and women.

These facts strikingly confirm this: women are today playing an exceptionally greater part in the country's life; today they constitute 58 per cent of all graduate specialists in the USSR; 74 per cent of all doctors, 75 per cent of all teachers, 63 per cent of all economists, 75 per cent of all planners, 36 per cent of all lawyers and 40 per cent of all agronomists.

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Thirty-eight per cent of all engineers and 59 per cent of all technicians with secondary specialized training are women. They account for 74 per cent of all production managers in industry, 94 per cent of laboratory assistants, 26 per cent of factory shop superintendents and supervisors in design offices and laboratories and 10 per cent of general managers and chief engineers.

In agriculture, over 100,000 women hold key positions, including 1,000 who are chairmen of collective farms or general managers of State farms.

The same favourable position exists in the sphere of education and health: 53 per cent of all school heads and directors of studies and 57 per cent of all heads of hospitals and clinics and senior doctors are women.

Soviet women take an active part in government and in the country's social and political life. Among the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR - the chief legislative organ of the state - there are 425 women, or 28 per cent of the membership. In the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics and in local government, women constitute 42.7 per cent of all deputies. There are four women in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Women are chairmen of the Supreme Soviets of a large number of Autonomous Republics: the Mordvinian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Dagestan ASSR, the North Ossetian ASSR, the Yakut ASSR, the Tuva ASSR, the Nakhichevan ASSR. Eight women are deputy chairmen of the Councils of Ministers of Union Republics: the RSFSR, the Azerbaijanian SSR, the Armenian SSR, the Georgian SSR, the Kirghiz SSR, the Lithuanian SSR, the Turkmen SSR and the Tajik SSR. Twenty-four women hold ministerial posts in the USSR and the Union Republics.

PART THREE

POSSIBLE LINES OF ACTION BY THE UNITED NATIONS TO GIVE EFFECT TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The experience of the Soviet Union shows that women can exercise their basic rights and freedoms only when the State does not confine itself to merely enunciating these rights and freedoms, but guarantees and protects them. This applies particularly to women's social and economic rights. Social and economic rights should be the constant concern of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women. It is the duty of these bodies, as of the United Nations as a whole, to encourage the adoption by States of immediate measures to ensure women their right to education, access to occupations, opportunities for employment and equal pay, and to explore methods of easing the work of women with families.

Specifically, such action must take the form, first of all, of a campaign for the further ratification of the international Covenants on Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. These Covenants represent a real advance on previous international instruments on human rights and women's rights in particular. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights merely sets out the principles and standards of conduct which all countries should observe in seeking to ensure freedom and human rights for their citizens, in the Covenants these human rights and fundamental freedoms become the subject of international agreements which are binding on all parties thereto. The Covenants provide for such important women's rights as the right to work, the right to education, the right to social security, the right to participate in State and government organs. The Covenants repeatedly emphasize that the State undertakes to guarantee rights without any discrimination. The Covenants on social and cultural rights contain an article dealing specifically with the equal rights of women. Under this article, the States parties "undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights". Under article 7, the States parties undertake to ensure that women enjoy "conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work". Article 10 safeguards the interests of mother and child.

It is particularly important for the implementation of women's rights that, under the Covenant each State undertakes to take steps "to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures" (article 2, para. 1). In the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the parties undertake to take the necessary internal steps to give effect to the provisions of the Covenant and where this is not provided for by existing legislation, to adopt legislative or other measures (article 2, para. 2). In particular, provision is made for judicial remedy in the event of violation of rights (article 2, para. 3). Thus the particular importance of the Covenants consists in the fact that they make it an obligation of the State not to permit any violation of human rights and to take steps to ensure the exercise of social, economic and other rights. Thus ratification of the Covenants will in itself help considerably in the implementation of women's rights.

However, the United Nations cannot and must not confine itself to efforts to secure ratification of the Covenants.

It is essential to bring about the inclusion of all economic and social rights, together with measures to guarantee them, in national constitutions and other legislative instruments of States. The enunciation of these rights in a constitution would constantly remind government agencies of their duty to assist effectively in their implementation and would prevent frequent changes of standards, since through their inclusion in the constitution, they would acquire the force of the basic law of the land, and this would give individuals and organizations concerned with progress in this sphere better opportunities for putting those standards into effect. Moreover, constitutional provisions relating to economic and social rights would undoubtedly provide a more solid foundation for judicial decisions in cases where judicial intervention was needed.

The Covenants do much to spell out the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but they themselves require more detailed definition. It would therefore be desirable to draw up and adopt more detailed instruments on the lines of the declaration on social development now in preparation, dealing more directly with the various aspects of the status of women in the world.

Because of the existence of manifold prejudices and because woman's role in society is underestimated, it is to be expected that in the implementation of the Covenants, improvements in the status of women will not be given priority. In the Secretary-General's note on United Nations assistance in improving the status of women (10 February 1967), it is emphasized that particular difficulties exist in this area (E/CN.6/477/Add.1, pp. 16-17). In his report of 31 January 1966, the Secretary-General quotes a UNESCO statement that "the authorities often have to make a heart-rending choice between the various projects for which they desire assistance. In the ensuing competition, activities of interest to women are often the losers" (E/CN.6/450/Add.1, para. 124). The Secretary-General believes, not without reason, that "national planners may be reluctant to advise the expenditure of monies on meeting the special needs of women, unless positive economic gains can be predicated, equivalent to those which would be gained by expenditure in other fields" (ibid., para. 125).

In view of this situation the United Nations and its specialized agencies should concern themselves with the adoption of urgent steps to disseminate and implement the Declaration of 7 November 1967 on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The Declaration represents an important step towards eliminating discrimination against women and establishing the principle of equality between men and women. However, it is necessary to go further and draw up special detailed conventions on this question. Recognition of such conventions by the Members of the United Nations would, to a considerable extent, help to prevent underestimation of women's interests when it is decided what priority should be given to women's rights in implementing the Covenants on human rights.

The Declaration on Social Development now being drafted should also be of great help in improving the status of women. The Declaration not only demands immediate and final elimination of all forms of inequality, exploitation, colonialism and racism; it not only determines the main goals of social development, including those which relate specifically to women (paragraph 9), it also specifies the basic methods and means of achieving these goals.

For more effective results in efforts to improve the status of women, it would be advisable to co-ordinate the activities of the United Nations with those of its specialized agencies (UNESCO, the ILO, UNICEF, WHO and other organizations which are concerned with improving the status of women). These organizations

should map out, in the light of the resources and capacity available, more concrete ways of dealing with the question of the status of women in the modern world.

The experience accumulated in different countries and regions can be very useful in connexion with the implementation of women's rights. Thus far, the United Nations has made little use of such experience. A problem is often studied for many years, even though a solution to it may already have been found and may be perfectly applicable. As an example, we may refer to one of the most pressing problems of the present time - that of pre-school institutions. In some countries, dozens of organizations of all kinds spend a long time making all kinds of surveys of families, questioning mothers on their attitudes to kindergartens and nurseries, studying the views of paediatricians and other children's specialists concerning the advisability of placing children in pre-school institutions. The views of owners of industrial undertakings and trade unions are studied concerning the advisability of employing women who have children. Often on the basis of insufficient data and sometimes unqualified or even prejudiced statements, a negative conclusion is reached concerning the public education of children and this leads to the view that the participation of women in the nation's work is undesirable.

On the other hand, millions of mothers have to work and do work, and this is an irreversible process. Millions of children remain without supervision. At the same time, mankind has already acquired certain experience in this sphere. Kindergartens and nurseries have become permanently established in all the socialist countries. Neither women with children, nor Governments, nor trade union authorities, nor teachers have any doubt that kindergartens and nurseries are useful and necessary. The only problem is to establish enough of them for all who need them. Noteworthy experience in the organization of pre-school systems has been gained in France, Sweden, Finland, many Asian and African countries, India, the Philippines, Ceylon, Ghana and the United Arab Republic. Nurseries and kindergartens are established on different principles in different countries.

Of course, the United Nations cannot impose the experience of one nation on another. Something which works splendidly in one country may be quite unsuited to another. And yet to scorn the experience of others or simply to ignore it on the grounds that the circumstances are different is not wise.

ited Nations and its specialized agencies can and must play an
and positive role in studying and disseminating the experience acquired
d in solving the difficult and sometimes contradictory problems related
rocess of the material and intellectual emancipation of women.
