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THE SOVIET UNION AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN
INDUSTRIALIZATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES *

prepared by

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Implementation of the economic, political and social rights of women in the developing countries is inseparably linked with the entire set of problems of national construction. The extensive and many-sided participation of women in public life is a guarantee of progressive transformations in all areas. Women fought selflessly against colonial rule and added many glorious pages to the history of the national-liberation movement in their respective countries. At the present stage their work and civic activity have an important role to play in strengthening economic independence and eradicating the aftermath of colonial enslavement.

Women make up about a third of the world's economically active population. Measures taken by the governments in many developing countries have increased the number of women working for hire. More women receive an education and become skilled workers. These positive changes, however, have not yet resulted in qualitative changes in the position of women in the developing countries. Millions of women are unemployed, and the level of their skill and pay is much lower than that of men. Women are frequently oppressed socially and economically, and their rights are infringed in various ways. The eradication of these phenomena is an important element of the progressive transformations in the economic and social structure of the newly-free countries.

Methods of achieving the full emancipation of women, the liquidation of inequality in various spheres of economic and social life and extensive involvement of women in social production depend on concrete historical conditions. The genuine

equality of women is one of the most important achievements of the Soviet Union. Obviously, not all the forms employed in the USSR to bring about the emancipation of women, including the stage of socialist industrialization, can be equally applied in the developing countries. Nevertheless, many of them can be successfully used, taking due account of local conditions. The victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution showed women the way to a new life. The Soviet Union's experience proves that, in the course of economic and social construction and industrialization, women can successfully learn trades formerly the preserve of men. In 1977, women constituted 51.5 per cent of all industrial and office workers in the Soviet Union. Women not only learn new trades but also achieve a high professional level, become managers and administrators and hold high posts in key branches of the national economy. All this has been made possible by the high educational level of Soviet women. Soviet women have every opportunity to acquire a secondary specialized education and higher education on a par with men. In 1976, for example, women made up 51 per cent of the students of higher educational establishments and 55 per cent of the students of secondary specialized schools. Working men and women have practically the same educational level in the Soviet Union.

Women judges, deputies to Soviets, lawyers, architects, managers and even ministers are a typical feature of the Soviet way of life. Millions of women engineers, doctors, judges and lawyers (every third specialist in these fields

is a woman) work with dedication and enthusiasm for the benefit of their country. This demonstrates the success of the socialist policy of equality between men and women in all fields of life.

Particularly striking changes have occurred in the position of women in the Soviet East. In pre-revolutionary Russia, working women in that region were in a worse position than women in the central areas of the country. In the early 20th century the Eastern regions (Central Asia, Kazakhstan and the Caucasus) were characterized by a natural economy mainly employing women. They also had to do all the housework, look after the livestock, work in the vegetable gardens and orchards, weave, and breed silkworms. Nevertheless, they had no rights either in family or in society.

The October revolution altered this situation and gave the women of the Soviet East equal rights with men in family, economic and cultural life. But these were only the first steps. In the specific conditions of the East, the rights granted by the law had to be put into practice. The almost total illiteracy of women was a serious obstacle in the way of drawing women into active production and public life. To help women out of the closed family circle and assist them in realizing and implementing their rights, women's clubs, artels, co-operatives and shops were created first of all in those regions where women, according to tradition, were not allowed to communicate with men. At the same time a broad campaign was under way to stamp out illiteracy. Special schools were set up and special courses organized.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party's policy of socialist industrialization and the creation in the East of modern

industry on a large scale was the most important way of increasing the participation of women in the life of society. The growth of industry was concurrent with the increase in the number of women engaged in this dynamic sector of the economy. For example, women made up 23 and 33 per cent of industrial workers in 1926 and 1937 respectively. The increase was due to the policy of state and public organisations which encouraged in every way the drawing of women of the Soviet East into industry. Special textile enterprises were set up to increase the employment opportunities of women.

The policy of the Party and the government was aimed at raising the level of women's skill in order to make their work more interesting and productive and increase their economic incentive. Local schools, including schools at factories, were opened for the purpose. Thousands of Uzbek, Tajik and other women of the Soviet East were trained at textile mills in Moscow and in other big cities. Experienced workers, technicians and engineers arrived in Central Asia to help the local women learn factory trades.

At the same time as boosting large-scale industrial production, the Party and the government took measures to organize producers' co-operatives. Handicrafts in which many women were engaged were well developed in the Eastern regions, and the protection of women from exploitation, their pooling into artels, and government assistance to them, facilitated their involvement in social production. Many women doing housework and looking after their children joined the co-operatives, worked at home and then turned their products over to the co-

operative. Limited as it was, this measure involved women in the common cause, provided them with a certain degree of independence and an opportunity to earn money. Gradually but steadily, women were drawn into social production and developed new interests.

Kirghizia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and other Soviet Republics today have millions of working women, including many in the fields of science and culture, outstanding grain-farmers and leading industrial workers. Their labour has been honoured with government awards and nation-wide recognition.

The Soviet Union's experience in boosting the economy of the formerly backward outlying regions of tsarist Russia is a proof of the decisive role of industrialization. The Soviet methods of economic construction as well as the stamping out of illiteracy among women, work among women of the Soviet East and large-scale organization of co-operatives of farmers and handicraftsmen, who had many women in their ranks - can be effectively used by international organisations and national governments which aim at improving the economic and social position of women in the developing countries.

The attainment of political independence considerably changed the legal status of women in most developing countries. Women have new opportunities to exercise their civil, social and political rights. The newly-free countries have passed laws which make women juridically equal with men. Under the adopted constitutions, women have the right to elect and be elected. An important achievement of a number of the newly-free states is the passing of laws on female labour protec-

tion and the adoption of new family and marriage codes designed to give women equality in the family.

The introduction of these laws is an important victory of the democratic forces in the developing countries. But it is obvious that in the specific conditions of these countries, centuries old traditions and the resistance of reactionary circles handicap the implementation of progressive legislation affecting women. That is why realization of the laws is the key element of the struggle for the genuine emancipation of women and their active involvement in social life. The backward customs and traditions which regarded woman as a second-rate human being have to be radically changed. Women can only be emancipated through drastic changes in the structure of society and through the overcoming of cultural and economic backwardness.

"Equality before the law", stressed Lenin, the founder of the Soviet State, is not necessarily equality in fact.

"We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in actual fact. For this working women must take an increasing part in the administration of socialised enterprises and in the administration of the state.

"By taking part in administration, women will learn quickly and will catch up with the men".¹

Only the extensive participation of women in social production creates the necessary prerequisites for their genuine emancipation and equality in all spheres of public life. Otherwise the laws on equality are implemented very slowly, and only

¹ V.I. Lenin. Coll. Works, Vol. 30, p. 371.

partially and inconsistently. Economic development and expansion of progressive social institutions dovetail with the vital interests of the peoples of the newly-free countries and are particularly important for the emancipation of women. The increasing professional employment of women not only provides them with economic independence and raises their income but also promotes the shaping of the personality, broadens their outlook, increases their political and civic consciousness and determines their new attitude to work and society.

As women are drawn into social production and their skill grows, their attitude to work changes and cultural demands increase. At the initial stages women's involvement in social production is dictated first of all by material interests while later on increasing importance is assumed by the satisfaction which work gives, interest in the results of work and the social importance of work. It stands to reason that an important factor is the expanding interests of working women and their participation in public life.

Employment which requires skill is an important prerequisite of promoting the intellectual development of women and their self-expression. At the same time the recognition of the usefulness of their work raises the dignity and prestige of women in the family, helps bring up children in keeping with the time, and orients them in the environment.

These goals can only be achieved in conditions of peaceful creative work. This requires stable peace and a stop to the arms race, which, according to some estimates, devours over one thousand billion dollars a day. The Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament (1978) discussed the

USSR - proposed comprehensive programme for stopping the arms race, which will make it possible to release huge means for boosting economic development and will contribute more to the general well-being of people everywhere. The Soviet Union's concrete proposals aimed at deepening detente meet the interests of all states, including the developing countries whose peoples are facing gigantic creative tasks. Many representatives from the developing countries were among the 149 states that took part in discussing concrete measures to curb the arms race and eliminate the threat of a world war.

The struggle to strengthen peace and avert the threat of a new war is ardently supported by millions of women in all countries. On behalf of the Women's International Democratic Federation and the Soviet peace champions, Valentina Nikolayeva-Tereshkova urged the United Nations to avert the threat of a nuclear war by stopping the production of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. This meets the vital interests of women throughout the world who are fighting for a happy future for their children and for an opportunity to live and work for the benefit of their respective countries.

International organisations and national governments pay great attention to increasing women's part in public and economic life. It will be recalled that, on the initiative of the UNO, 1975 was proclaimed Women's Year. The World Conference, held in mid-1975 in Mexico within the framework of International Women's Year, passed a World Plan of Action and two regional plans, concentrating on the problem of women in the countries of Asia. The 34th session of the UN Economic and

Social Commission for the countries of Asia and the Pacific (March 1978) particularly noted the necessity of the extensive participation of women in the process of development as a condition of implementation of the longterm socio-economic programmes of the countries of that region.

The close interrelation between the economic advance of the developing countries and the preservation of peace was stressed once again at the World Conference on Development in Budapest. The speakers noted that an end cannot be put to hunger, poverty and neo-colonialism automatically. It can only be achieved through the unceasing efforts of the progressive forces. At the Conference the representatives of the Women's International Democratic Federation stressed the necessity of making the utmost use of the most valuable of all resources - people, half of whom are women.

Analyzing the prospects of building an independent Indian economy, Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958 wrote that to awaken the people, it was necessary to awaken the women. Their activity would stimulate the economy and activate the countryside and the entire country. The possibility of involving women actively in production depends on the general state of the economy, the rate of its development and, particularly, the number of job openings. In the newly-free countries industrialization is of great importance. This process, aimed at restructuring the material-technical basis of the economy by means of creating large-scale production in all its branches, embraces both social and economic aspects of a nation's development.

To a varying degree industrialization concerns the economy, policy, industry, agriculture, trade and finances of the newly-

free states. At the same time, industrialization is preferred in those branches whose priority development or modernization can, in the existing conditions of a given country, ensure the application of modern scientific and technological achievements and positively affect the rates of economic advance as a whole. This, in its turn, creates real prerequisites for increasing employment. The development of the key branches of the processing industry is the key element of industrialization. Comprehensive industrial development is necessary taking account of the fact that a number of branches (such as the textile industry, electronics) can successfully use mainly female labour. The setting up and expansion of the national base of the manufacturing industry ensures favourable conditions for boosting other economic sectors and first of all for transforming agriculture.

As experience shows, the development rates in industry are nearly twice as high as in other economic sectors in the newly-free countries. A number of Afro-Asian countries have new big industrial centres. The national industry started to produce goods which were formerly imported. Many industrial branches of Asian, African and Latin American countries turn out items to be exported. This is one of the most important achievements of the newly-free countries in their struggle for economic independence.

At the same time the peculiarities of the socio-economic development of the newly-free countries influence the forms and methods of industrialization, which, in its turn, affects the position of women and the struggle for their rights. Without dwelling in detail on many characteristic features of

the industrialization in these countries, it is necessary to single out the question of employment. According to the ILO, the level of unemployment in the developing countries is nearly 25 per cent of the available work-force. Some researchers believe unemployment in those countries is growing by about 8.5 per cent a year which is almost as high as the annual growth rate of industrial production in the second development decade. Against the background of an acute shortage of job openings and a great number of unemployed men, women find it particularly hard to find work in industry, especially large-scale industry. This situation is aggravated by the fact that there are few women (several per cent of the total number of employed women) with a technical education. Most women are unskilled workers.

Industrialization is a long process involving many difficulties, and the state and its economic policy play an important role in overcoming them. National long-term programmes of socio-economic development have won recognition in the newly-free countries. An analysis of such programmes of the Asian, African and Latin American countries leads one to the conclusion that a considerable part of the state investments is designed to create and expand the social and economic infrastructure, which is a necessary prerequisite of expanding production in all economic branches. The creation of an infrastructure and industrialization are closely interrelated and interdependent. This is expressed in the fact that the development of the infrastructure, including the social infrastructure, speeds up the involvement of many sections of the population in active production, ensures conditions for improving public

health, makes education more accessible to broader sections, and stimulates economic activity in remote districts and regions. On the other hand, new means of communication, accessibility of the mass media, expanding national industry and trade, and stronger ties with agriculture awaken the mass of the people from centuries-old apathy and draw them into active life.

Since, at the initial stages, the building of the infrastructure demands low-skilled labour, it can increase female employment. Besides, big state investments in social projects create a basis for increasing women's participation in the life of the country. This gives rise to a demand for teachers, doctors and hospital nurses. To meet this demand, the number of girl students must be increased at all levels of education.

The experience of the Soviet Union, and particularly its experience in overcoming the backwardness of the outlying regions of former tsarist Russia, shows that the stamping out of illiteracy is a necessary prerequisite for women's participation in public life. The newly-free countries face gigantic tasks in this respect. The total number of illiterate persons in the Third World is over 785 million, of which 468 million are women.

The elimination of illiteracy is the first, absolutely necessary step in overcoming women's social, political and economic backwardness. It is not only a question of giving women the minimum of knowledge and teaching them to read. Of no less importance is their involvement in active production work. It can be assumed there is a direct relation between the overcoming of illiteracy and the speeding up of the socio-

economic development as a whole. This problem is particularly pressing for countries with a low national per capita income, most of which are situated in Asia and Africa, where female illiteracy, particularly in rural areas, exceeds 90 per cent. To a certain extent, this situation is similar to that observed in the Eastern areas of Russia prior to the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. For example, in Turkmenia, with a population of about a million, fewer than 5,000 children, including only several dozen girls, attended schools. A tsarist official serving in Turkmenistan, wrote in 1906 that 460 years would be required to stamp out illiteracy in that area. It took the Soviet government less than 50 years to eradicate the illiteracy of the population, including women. This made it easier for the backward regions of the Soviet East to attain high rates of industrial and agricultural development.

Much attention is given to women's education, for example, in India. The scale of the problem is seen from the following figures. In 1971 the country had 215 million illiterate women whose number reached 230 million in 1976, although the share of literate women also increased to reach about 20 per cent of the entire adult female population. Girls have additional privileges in the field of education in a number of states. Nevertheless, as the Indian Commission on Education notes, very many girls (more than 62 per cent in the primary school) leave school, the main reason being poverty. Female domestic labour is used at such an early age that poor families have to take their girls from school and engage them in auxiliary work. Unfortunately, the lack of statistical data makes it impossible to have exact figures in the field of child labour.

It might be expedient to carry out case studies on a national level by several groups of developing countries with a view to drawing conclusions about possible ways of assisting the poorest families to provide girls from these sections of the population with an opportunity to receive an education. Serious difficulties are presented by the lack of separate schools for boys and girls in areas where customs and traditions prevent their joint education.

The training of qualified female personnel in such spheres as public education, the medical service and social security makes it possible not only to increase female employment but also to provide the national economy with the necessary specialists who, in their turn, will make it easier for millions of women to find the road to a new life. It is clear that women with an education have an especially important part to play in the transformation of society and in the work of enlightenment in places where old customs and traditions are still strong.

In the USSR women play a tremendous role in the social infrastructure: in education, public health and social security. In 1976, women made up 70 per cent of all teachers and 69 per cent of doctors. For the sake of comparison, in 1913 there were fewer than 3,000 women doctors, whereas in 1976 their number was 600,000.¹

The development of the social and economic infrastructure under the aegis of the national state is a necessary condition for increasing female employment in the newly-free countries.

¹ Vestnik statistiki, 1978, No. 1, p. 88.

In their turn, educated women have a beneficial effect on the social climate by sharing their know-how, drawing new categories of women into public life and helping them to realize their civil rights and duties.

Further industrialization, particularly the expansion of the most dynamic branches of industry and the building of big modern projects, especially in the state sector of the newly-free countries, create the prerequisites for increasing the number of economically active women. This is no doubt a progressive phenomenon promoting the social role of women and strengthening their position in society. The high rates of development of the processing industry ensure conditions for a certain increase in employment. Of great importance is a kind of "chain reaction" engendered by the putting into operation of a major project, which requires the products of a number of other industries, new forms of the infrastructure and an expansion of the services sphere. In this case, the possibilities of increasing employment are determined not by the demand of one big enterprise but by the requirements of a whole range of productive and non-productive units.

The employment of women in factories entails considerable complications in the newly-free countries. The know-how obtained in agriculture or housework is of little use in factories. In many Afro-Asian countries women are accustomed to work sitting on the floor or squatting, and find it difficult to stand for the duration of a shift at a lathe. Factory work demands strict discipline to which people from the country-side are not accustomed. Time and preparatory work are needed.

The national long-term plans of many newly-free countries provide for the development of branches of light industry (textiles, clothing and food) which can produce consumer goods using local raw materials. Under favourable conditions, these enterprises can employ women, providing they undergo a course of training. Although work at such projects differs considerably from housework, the experience of many light industry enterprises in India, Pakistan and Algeria shows that women successfully learn the necessary know-how.

It does not mean, however, that it is expedient to limit women's participation in industrial production to light industry. Provided that the necessary training is available, women cope well with the work in many branches of modern industrial production. This makes the problem of women's technical education still more acute. Raising the level of women's skill is of great socio-political importance. Women workers can attain economic equality with men and equal rights to work and pay only by overcoming their cultural and technical backwardness.

In this context one can make use of the rich experience of the Soviet Union in personnel training. Back in the 1930's, in the course of socialist industrialization, factory workshop schools were set up, where young people received both a general education and job training under the guidance of experienced teachers and foremen. The personnel thus trained played an important part in providing industrial production with a skilled labour-force. At the same time this measure allowed hundreds of thousands of young people, including women, to acquire within a short period of time a secondary specialized technical education and a valuable skill. The decisions of the Communist Party

and the Soviet government provide for the further improvement of the system of vocational training. For example, along with increasing the number of vocational schools, it was found necessary to supply them with modern equipment in order to improve the quality of training. Particular attention is paid to the specialization of secondary schools. The role the technical and vocational schools play in training skilled personnel for the USSR's economy is revealed by the fact that over a million people complete the courses at these schools every year.

As has been noted, employment became a particularly acute problem in the developing countries. In these conditions, industrialization based only on modern capital-consuming technology, which has a fairly limited demand for labour-force and needs rather highly-skilled workers, is fraught with the danger of further aggravation of the problem of employment. This is one of the reasons why national long-term plans of the newly-free countries provide not only for the advance of large-scale modern industrial production, primarily in the state sector, but also for the support and encouragement of small-scale industrial production based on labour-consuming machinery with a view to ensuring the employment of broad sections of the population.

The building and expansion of small and medium-sized projects does not require considerable capital investments, imported technology or raw materials. They produce goods mainly on the basis of labour-consuming technology, and this can result in a substantial increase in job openings and a higher demand for an unskilled and low-skilled work-force. Expanded employment leads, to a certain extent, to higher incomes of

the less propertied sections of the population. The growing number of work places, and the possibility of being employed in small-scale industrial production which does not require complex special training, can increase female employment and prevent women from migrating to the big cities, where they encounter additional difficulties of adaptation.

Small-scale industrial production in the newly-free countries, particularly production dispersed in rural areas, somewhat facilitates women's involvement in active production. Such forms as the fulfilment at home of orders from large enterprises, or work at small nearby enterprises, can teach women new types of work and know-how. The experience shows that women who have learnt a certain trade find it much easier to master modern industrial trades. But small enterprises tend to exploit women workers, who have to work longer hours for miserable pay. One of the difficulties is that such enterprises try to escape state control and violate labour protection measures. The setting up of co-operatives is of great importance for protecting these women whose number is great since small enterprises do not require special training and demand cheap female labour. In this case it is easier to attract the attention of state organisations to the state of affairs in the industry with a view to improving working conditions.

Female employment can also be increased through expanding handicrafts, a traditional sphere of female employment in Afro-Asian countries. The demand for handicraft articles is growing on domestic and foreign markets. Improved communication means and road-building facilitate the delivery of

these articles to big cities and tourist centres. The state is interested in increasing exports of such articles in exchange for foreign currency. The organisation of special marketing co-operatives and their better crediting through special banks will favourably affect the position of working people, particularly women, in this sphere and will reduce their dependence on innumerable middlemen and the bondage of debts.

In the USSR, the state support of handicrafts plays an important part in preserving traditional small-scale production. The country has over 200 traditional crafts co-operatives uniting tens of thousands of qualified handicraftsmen. Their output is steadily growing and the quality of the articles made is improving. The government takes measures to improve the supply of high-quality raw materials, equipment and instruments to handicraftsmen. Considerable assistance is given to handicraftsmen working at home, many of whom are women. As a result of the state policy, ancient handicrafts are being revived and preserved in the epoch of the scientific and technological revolution.

Industrialization in the newly-free countries must be co-ordinated with the development of agriculture. These two most important fields of development are mutually supplementary and do not contradict each other. Industry with its higher concentration of production is more easily influenced by scientific and technical progress than is agriculture, and is well ahead of the latter in the development of productive forces. In those countries the productivity of an industrial worker is, on average, 6-8 times as high as that of an agricultural worker.

The redundancy of manpower, the demand for which in other economic branches is very limited, is one of the main reasons for the low labour productivity in the agrarian sector.

Women constitute the bulk of the work-force in agriculture, and the absence of machines makes their work particularly hard and inefficient. The growing tide of migration of men to the towns (which, according to Soviet researchers, is much higher than that of women) puts the main burden of land cultivation and housework on the shoulders of the women. The introduction of highly-productive machinery supplied by the national industry, the application of fertilizers and the use of the latest achievements of agro-technical science will considerably increase labour productivity in agriculture and improve the qualifications of those engaged in this key economic branch of the economy. Certain good results can be achieved by expanding the small-scale production turning out primitive machines and agricultural implements. The true restructuring of backward agrarian relations, however, is accomplished by way of progressive agrarian reforms, big state investments, first of all in irrigation systems, and supplying agriculture with modern technology.

As the experience of many newly-free countries shows, the implementation of communal development projects is of great importance at the present stage: for example, the supplying of pure water to rural inhabitants and improvement of sanitary conditions. These services, provided by the local administration in line with the state policy can have a favourable effect on women's participation in public affairs and increase their contribution to the common good as women are especially interested in the health care of the members of their families especially the children.

The carrying out of progressive agrarian reforms meets the vital interests of agricultural women workers. A positive role is played by the development of co-operatives, including marketing and then production co-operatives. The transformation of the countryside has an important place in the modernizing of agriculture and the boosting of the economy, and the active participation of women in this process is of paramount importance. In the co-operatives, specially trained people can help women to learn the basics of sanitation, hygiene, and family-planning, and to undergo a course of training in new forms of work.

Certain conditions are required to ensure the extensive participation of women in socio-economic construction in the newly-free countries. First in the list comes the health care of working mothers. The Soviet Union has been tremendously successful in this field. Soviet legislation provides special guarantees for the protection of female labour. It is forbidden to employ women in heavy work detrimental to their health. The administration and trade unions must strictly observe sanitary standards and safety engineering at places of work.

Mothers are highly respected in the Soviet Union. Soviet legislation provides for women pre-natal and post-natal leave on full pay, and a number of other benefits. The country has a vast network of maternity consultation centres, polyclinics and dispensaries (over 22,000 in 1976). The development of pre-school educational establishments is of no less importance for women's participation in the sphere of production. In 1976, the country's 117,000 kindergartens and nurseries enrolled 12.1 million children, providing their mothers with the oppor-

tunity to contribute to the economy of the country. The figures showing the growing number of children attending pre-school educational establishments in the Central Asian Republics are particularly significant. For example, Kirghizia had over 7,000 children attending pre-school establishments in 1940, and 127,000 in 1976. The figures for Tajikistan are 18,000 and 91,000, and for Turkmenia - 25,000 and 108,000, respectively.¹ This creates the objective conditions for the participation of women in the national economy on a wider scale.

The development of pre-school establishments, state assistance in organising everyday life and housework, and various benefits to working women and expectant and nursing mothers allow Soviet women to play their part as mothers and to take part in creative work at the same time.

Soviet women are ensured the right to work by the steady development of the national economy, the growing productive forces of Soviet society, the absence of crises and the absence of unemployment. The socialist industrialization carried out in the Soviet Union has secured for women all the necessary conditions for the broadest participation in all spheres of economic and social life. Women have the right to guaranteed wages in accordance with the quality and quantity of their work, free vocational training and re-training, and participation in the running of production.

Article 35 of the Constitution of the USSR reads: "Women and men have equal rights in the USSR. Exercise of these rights

¹ Vestnik statistiki, 1978, No. 1, pp. 93-94.

is ensured by according women equal access with men to education and vocational and professional training, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration, and promotion, and in social and political, and cultural activity, and by special labour and health-protection measures for women; by providing conditions enabling mothers to work; by legal protection, and material and moral support for mothers and children, including paid leaves and other benefits for expectant mothers and mothers, and the gradual reduction of working time for mothers with small children".¹

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Women's involvement in social production in the developing countries and the elimination of their lack of rights and social oppression is a long and extremely complex process, in which no easy and rapid victories can be expected. It requires economic, social and political measures planned for a long period of time and carried out at different levels, from the government to rural communes.

National and international measures aimed at improving the position of women are a component part of all progressive socio-economic programmes. Experience shows that the emancipation of women is greatly promoted by the state's participation in economic development, industrialization and expansion of the social and economic infrastructure. All this creates certain prerequisites for increasing female employment and ensures opportunities for acquiring an education.

¹ Constitution of the USSR, Moscow, 1977.

It is expedient to give particular attention to the improvement of statistics giving a picture of women's position in the developing countries. Official statistics often ignores the "helping" family members, most of whom are women engaged in handicrafts, trade and the services. This underrates the importance of women's work for the economy in most developing countries and, what is most important, does not attract the attention of the public and of state offices to the necessity of regulating the work of women employed in auxiliary operations, and of working out legislative measures as regards their pay, so as to prevent various forms of discrimination.

It is believed that the expansion of statistical data available on women's position and the employment of women in various economic branches, particularly in industry, would greatly help national governments in working out and taking decisions aimed at more extensive involvement of women in social production. International organisations can play an important part in this. Necessary information and all-round elucidation of the position of women could be greatly promoted by detailed questionnaires sponsored by sociologists, economists and public health workers. After case (but representative) studies, based on these questionnaires, international organisations and national governments would have important information on this problem in the developing countries. In the future this material could assist in the taking of decisions at various levels.

It is expedient to strengthen co-operation between all UN bodies dealing with the position of women, and to co-ordinate their efforts with a view to the earliest possible implementation

of the great goals of the World Plan of Action. The UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) provides a real possibility of assessing the results achieved in the carrying out of national and international programmes aimed at ensuring women's equality in economic, social and political spheres. The Second World Conference of the UNO, planned for 1980, will take stock of what was done in the first half of the Decade and map out new tasks. Of great importance is the carrying out of national surveys in the developing countries to give a picture of the position of women in the basic sectors of the economy, the possibility of effecting an increase in female employment and ways of raising women's pay.

It is also very important to make wide use of the mass media to propagate progressive measures to protect and ensure women's rights, and make known the significance of their participation in production and the inadmissibility of any forms of discrimination against women. It must be noted in this context that the question of the equality of women in all areas of life has an important place in Soviet literature and art. Films and shows devoted to the new role of women in Soviet society (feature films "A Member of the Government", "The Bright Road", "The First Teacher", etc.) are very popular. The use of TV and the cinema for the great goals of teaching and enlightening women can greatly speed up their involvement in social life and active production.



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