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REVOLUTION

IN WOMEN

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I ' Novosli Press Agency Publishing House

Moscow 1985

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Q Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1985

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Social progress is closely linked with the role women play in society. It would be impossible today to discuss the past, present and future of humanity without dwelling on the position of women. Of course, the attitude to various aspects of their position differs from country to country depending on the level of economic development, and the social system. One thing is clear however: women play a far greater role in society and the problems relating to their life can no longer wait for a solution. This is why the United Nations has declared the years 1975-1985 the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. This decision testifies to the general recognition of the principle of equality of men and women and of the important role women play in society.

Lenin's Principles for Solving the Problem of the Position of Women

The founder of the Soviet state, Vladimir Lenin, used to say that the position of women was the barometer of democracy in any country.

In many speeches he outlined the principles for solving the problems of the position of women. These speeches combined make up a programme of the social emancipation of Women. The first and most important provision of this programme was to bring about the emancipation of women and their complete social equality as an inalienable part of the revolutionary transformation of society. This required the elimination of the exploitation of man by man, the development of the national economy, the accomplishment of a cultural revolution, and so on. "This and this alone opens up the way towards a complete and actual emancipation of woman," Lenin said.

At the same time, he insisted that working women be regarded as lighters for democracy, a powerful social force without whose participation it would have been impossible to solve the fundamental problems concerning the revolution. "The experience of all liberation movements," he pointed out, "has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it." That was why Lenin considered it necessary to conduct systematic work among women in order to help them comprehend more fully their socially useful role and turn them into active builders of a new society.

The second very important Leninist principle in the solution of this problem is the exercise of equal rights by men and women in all spheres of life.

- Capitalism combines formal equality with economic and social inequality. And one of the most glaring manifestations of this inconsistency is the inequality of women. Complete equality has not been granted even by the most, progressive republican, and democratic bourgeois states," Lenin wrote.

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One of the conditions for the social emancipation of women, and, consequently, one of the principles for solving this question was. in Lenin's view, the wide use of female labour in social production. He said that "to client her complete emancipation and make her the equal of the man, it is necessary for the national economy to be socialised and for women to participate in common productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men."

However, the equality of women with men in social production must be understood not as equal use of their physical strength. Unlike men, women should not do work requiring much physical effort. The involvement of women in social production must be carried out with an eye to their great social mission as mothers, which puts additional emphasis on women's labour protection. Female labour in social production-free, conscious and creative-helps the all-round development of the woman's personality, relieves her of the burdens of secluded life, and stimulates her social activity.

Lenin believed that women should take an active part in administering all the affairs of society. "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," he wrote.

Lenin devoted a great deal of attention to the development of the women's movement, to the unity of working women in all countries in the struggle for their rights. One of the distinguishing features of our time is the mass participation of women in

the class struggle, the anti-imperialist movement
and the struggle for peace. This is quite natural
because the number of women engaged in produc-

tion and in other Spheres of human activity is growing, and so is their political awareness. It should be noted here that Lenin's provisions about social emancipation of women apply to all countries and therefore have great international significance. This in turn means that the problem of the position of women can be solved only through the practical realization of Lenin's ideas on the achievement of full equality for them.

The Position of Women in Pre-Soviet Russia, and the Beginning of Work Among Women

It is well-nigh impossible to imagine the hardships that women had to endure in pre-Soviet Russia. In old Russia women had no rights either in the family or in society in general. In addition, women-workers suffered from merciless capitalist exploitation. Their working day was extremely long: at heavy industry enterprises, for example, women had to work on average 11 to 12 hours a day; in cottage industry and handicrafts their working day was even longer; the working day for peasant women averaged 11 hours, and in summer time was as long as 16 hours. Female labour was paid for at rates which were 50 per cent lower than those for men. Fines, rudeness and degrading treatment of women by foremen were common practice. There were no labour safety regulations for women to speak of, let alone maternity protection. It was common practice to fire pregnant women. And in order not to lose their daily bread, many working women concealed their condition as best they could, were delivered of their babies right on the shop floor and reported for work the next day.

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Women's lack of economic rights was exacerbated by the low living standards of the working people in general. In industrial output Russia lagged about 50 to 100 years behind the advanced capitalist Countries. Primitive farm implements used on small holdings reduced agricultural production to a very low-grade market economy and even further down to the subsistence economy.

The Code of Laws of the Russians read:

"The wife must obey her husband as the head of family, live with him in love and treat him with the esteem, utmost respect, obedience and humility due to him as the master of the house."

Before the 1917 Revolution women in Russia had no political rights whatsoever. They had no right to vote or be elected either to the bodies of local self-government, or, much less, to the supreme bodies of state power. The tsarist law read: "Women are not eligible for election to the State Duma."

The position of women in the outlying areas of the country with a non-Russian population was particularly difficult. Lenin said that before the Socialist Revolution the women of the East were the most oppressed of the oppressed and the most enslaved of the enslaved. Indeed, they were nothing more than slaves. Women's subordinate position was also evident in the sphere of ownership relations and inheritance rights. The eastern woman was in effect deprived of the right to inherit property. She was also deprived of the most elementary legal rights and was completely divorced from social life. For instance, evidence given in court by two female witnesses carried as much weight as that given by one man. It is difficult today to imagine that all this is true: the sealed-off half of the courtyard set aside

only for women, the Inarrying-off of girls 10-12
years old, and the bitter lot of the third or fourth
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wife of a rich hey. Before the Socialist. Ilevolutitm, only an average of 40.3 per cent of men could read and write, while the proportion of literate women was a mere 16.6 per cent. As for the women 01' the East, practically all of them were illiterate. All these problems confronted the working class and its Party. Their solution had to be sought in the common interests of working men and women both of whom had no rights and both of whom were subjected to merciless exploitation. This is why at the dawn of the revolutionary movement Lenin insisted on engaging working women in revolutionary activity and drawing them into the political struggle. 1'

How was revolutionary agitation conducted among women back in tsarist times?

In the first place, this was done through the distribution of political leaflets and proclamations addressed directly to working women. In 1895, Lenin wrote a message To the Working Man and Women of the Thornton Factory. Also at that period, the Bolsheviks issued the leaflets To the I'Vor/cing Women of the Lafcrn Factory and To All Women Cigarette Vendors of St. Petersburg. These were, in fact, the first instances of social-democratic literature for women. In a very simple language, and using examples from the lives of women-workers, these leaflets taught them how to tell enemies from friends, showed the road to a better life, and called upon them to unite with the working men. One such leaflet read: "Working women, light for better life. Take joint action in the struggle for the cause of the working class, because your strength lies in your unity."

In 1901, Nadezhda Il'rupskaya, Lenin's wife and associate, wrote a brochure The Working Woman which was published in the Leninist newspaper 10

lecm. In it she wrote that only the victory 01' the Revolution would free women from exploitation, would bring them freedom and equality, and would make household chores easier for them. However, she said, this victory would be impossible without the active participation of working women themselves.

In the years of political reaction that followed 1.11t' First Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik Party made the best possible use of all legal means (in addition to underground revolutionary work) for the political education of working women. Among those were trade unions, Working men's clubs, cultural and educational organisations, and evening and Sunday schools for adults. But the most effective centres for political agitation and propaganda were clubs. Attached to these clubs were evening schools and libraries. Lectures were organised there and recreational activities in the evenings were popular. Initially, young working women felt drawn to the club because of the chance it offered of entering an evening school. But later on, they saw that there was another side to the clubs activities namely, the illegal work of the Party. Not long afterwards, they took part in this kind of work too. At first, they acted as look-outs at the entrance to the place where a clandestine meeting was being held. Later, they did messenger work, carrying letters and packages. And still later, such women-workers were used to do liaison work with factories and plants. Working women went to visit their arrested comrades, posing as their sisters, wives or brides, passed them money and linen, and brought news about

their families and about the Party.

From 1912 onwards, the Bolsheviks started publication in Russia of the Party newspaper Pravda.

The paper made an extensive contribution to the

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Celebration of International Women's Day in HRS,
which was the first time it was observed in Russia.
From January 20 the newspaper ran a special
column For working women. Pravda carried a list of
subjects that it recommended he discussed at pub-
lic meetings preceding the celebration of Interna-
tional Women's Day. It published letters and items
sent in by Working Women, as well as articles about
female labour and the Bolshevik Party's greetings
to working women. Pravda received so many items
written by women-workers that it could not print
all of them. At the same time, the new revolution-
ary upsurge in the country made it necessary to
raise the class consciousness of working women and
draw more and more of them into the revolution-
ary struggle. That was when Lenin decided that it
was necessary to start a special journal for working
women. On March 8, 1914 (International Women's
Day) the first issue of the magazine Rabotnitsa
(VWoman-XWorker) came out.

ICrupskaya suggested that the magazine contain
the following sections: .

(a) editorial on current politics; (b) the work-
ing-class movement and the participation of women-
workers in its different sectors; (c) women's work-
ing conditions at factories, in workshops, at the
counter, and in cottage industry; the-complitions of
home helps; ((1) labour protection for women;
(e) chronicle of events of political and working
life; (i) foreign section (the struggle of working
women abroad); (g) the family and the working
woman.

Krupskaya herself wrote an editorial for the first
issue of Rabotnitsa. In it she pointed to the tasks
common for all working women and their links with
the proletarian movement in Russia and all other
countries. Itrupshaya called upon women-workers to
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join forces with the entire working class in the
light to change the existing political system. The
editorial concluded with the following words: "Our
magazine is trying to help working women become
more socially aware and help them organise. The
magazine has no funds. We started out with a hun-
dred roubles contributed by workers' publishing
houses. We call upon all socially and politically
aware women-workers to take part in the work of
our magazine. Share your experience with socially
less advanced women-workers, tell them about your
First steps on the road of struggle, about your suc-
cesses and failures, about your activities in work-
ers' organisations. Write letters and short articles
for our magazine. Please inform us about the sub-
jects you like to read about in Rabotnitsa and tell
us about its shortcomings."

In 1914 only seven issues of this magazine were
put out. Out of these seven issues, two whole edi-
tions were confiscated by the police. In spite of
'these setbacks, the publication of Rabotnitsa was
an important development. The magazine called
upon working women to fight against tsarism,
against all oppressors and showed them how to carry
out their struggle. That was why women-readers
loved their magazine, valued it, circulated it at fac-
tories, and sent in their last kopecks to keep it
going, even at the risk of arrest and imprisonment.
The Victory of the Socialist Revolution
in Russia in October 1917 and
Changes in the Position of Women
The struggle for the emancipation of women is
one of the glorious pages in the history of the Com-

a munist Party of the Soviet Union. The Party always

included the demand for the legal equality of women among the principal provisions of its programme. a

The first programme of the Party was formulated by Lenin and was adopted at its Second Congress in 1903. At that time, Russia stood on the threshold of a democratic revolution. The programme outlined the immediate tasks of the proletariat-the overthrow of autocracy and its replacement with a democratic republic-and stipulated equal political rights for men and women, democratic freedoms, and the eight-hour working day. The programme read: "To avert the physical and moral extinction of the working class and to stimulate its activity in a revolutionary struggle, the Party demands: the prohibition of women's labour in industries harmful to their health; the release of women from work for four weeks before and six weeks after giving birth to a child with all the wages paid; the organisation of creches for babies at; all factories and plants which employ women; the release of women from work to breast-feed their babies for at least half an hour every three hours; the appointment of women-inspectors in these industries where female labour is used."

All these demands were part of the struggle for democracy and could have been achieved together with other democratic transformations in society. However, none of the democratic demands of the Party with regard to the position of women had been realized until after the victory of the Socialist Revolution of 1917.

In October 1917, the Great October Socialist Revolution was victorious under the leadership of the Communist Party which established the rule of the working class acting in alliance with the poor peasants. By doing so, the new government acted in

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the interests of all working people. It abolished private ownership of the means of production and replaced it with public ownership. It also eliminated all forms of oppression, including the oppression of women. The next task was to start building a new society. It was only in these conditions that the women's question could be solved in practical terms.

So what were the first steps that the new Soviet state took to emancipate women? The most important condition for ensuring legal equality for men and women was to effect fundamental changes in the economic sphere. These had a lasting influence on the economic position of working women.

The workers' and peasants' government adopted a number of decrees aimed at eliminating the unjust social status of woman. In December 1917, the government issued a number of historic decrees with Lenin's signature-On the Dissolution of Marriage, On Civil Marriage, Children and the Introduction of Civil Registration which put an end to the privileged position of the husband and gave the wife equal rights to contract and dissolve marriage, and eliminated inequality in the social status of children born out of wedlock. The decree On the Wages and Salaries of Workers and Office Employees (September 1918) established equal pay for equal work for all men and women. This ruled out any discrimination against women. The decree On the Introduction of the Eight-Hour Working Day (October 1917) established an equal eight-hour working day for all working people. The decree put a ceiling on overtime and night shifts for women.

The Soviet state assumed responsibility for the medical care of mothers and new-born babies. The Soviet governments decree On Insurance in Case of Illness (December 1917) entitled pregnant wom-

en to special leave and pay. 'I'he decree On Mother-
:uul-Chihl Care (January 1918) set out a whole
programme for reorganising all maternity and child-
care institutions.

On the very first day of the Revolution, the
Soviet government proclaimed political equality be-
tween all working men and women. This was reflect-
ed in the decree On the Formation of the Work-
ers' and Peasants' Government (October 1917), and
in the Declaration of the Rights of the Telling and
Exploited People (January 1918). The question of
equality for women was further developed in the
first Soviet Constitution adopted at the Fifth All-
Russia Congress of Soviets on July 10, 1918. The
Constitution laid the legal basis for these rights by
proclaiming in Article 22 equality for all citizens
of the Soviet Republic regardless of sex, race and
nationality. It also guaranteed in Article 64 equal
rights for men and women to elect and be elected
to bodies of power.

Allowing for the specific features of the way of
life of the Oriental peoples, the Soviet government
adopted, alongside general laws, additional laws
aimed at emancipating the women of the Soviet
East. For example, on July 14, 1921, the Central
Executive Committee of the Soviets of the Turkes-
tan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic adopted
a decree abolishing the payment of bride-money and
raising the eligible age for marriage.

Commenting on these first laws and decrees of
the Soviet government with regard to equality of
men and women, Lenin said: "Soviet power has im-
plemented democracy to a greater degree than any
of the other, most advanced countries because it has
not left in its laws any trace of the inequality of
women. .. In the sphere of legislation, however, we
have done everything required of us to put women
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in a position of equality and we have every right to
be proud of it."

This does not mean, however, that full equality
for women was established right after the victory
of the Revolution. In 1919, Lenin pointed out that
although the position of women in Soviet Russia
was perfect from the point of view of the most ad-
vanced nations at the time, the laws passed in this
country were only the first step and did only part
of the job. The complete emancipation of women
is closely linked with the participation of women
themselves in the building of a new society. This
called for developing social production and teach-
ing women how to use the laws. Women also had
to improve their industrial skills and eliminate il-
literacy in their midst. It was also necessary to
overcome the established customs and views with
regard to women.

Thus, after the Revolution the people of this
country embarked upon the building of a new so-
ciety. Among the many important social problems to
be solved was also the one concerning the position
of women. The general programme for socialist re-
construction adopted at the Eighth Congress of the
Communist Party in 1919 provided for the estab-
lishment of full political and legal equality for wom-
en and men. The programme also provided for
engaging women in social production and the pub-
lic, political and cultural life of society, setting up
a whole network of pre-school child-care establish-
ments, developing community centres, remodelling
the entire system of domestic work, and overcom-
ing outdated reactionary views concerning the role

played by women in society and in the family.
To solve all these tasks, special departments were
set up at Party committees for work among women.
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It should be pointed out that in the early years of Soviet power there were great difficulties involved in solving the problem of the position of women in Russia.

The Civil War and military intervention against the young Soviet Republic by fourteen nations weakened its economy. Hundreds of industrial enterprises lay in ruins. There was an acute shortage of fuel and raw materials. The situation in agriculture was extremely serious, and this was at a time when the rural areas accounted (according to the figures for 1920) for 85 per cent of the country's population. It must also be borne in mind that peasant women were less experienced in the class struggle, with weaker revolutionary traditions and a lower cultural standard than women living in cities and towns.

The new society was being built in Soviet Russia amidst an acute class struggle which the exploiter classes had forced upon the people. These classes hoped that they would eventually achieve the restoration of the old regime. They were supported in their aim by the bourgeoisie in other countries. Taking advantage of the insufficient social awareness and political illiteracy of some working women, the counter-revolutionaries sought to win these women over to their side.

The multinational make-up of Russia posed another very serious problem. Some of the peoples had already gone through the capitalist stage of development even before the Revolution, while others were still at the stage of disintegration of primitive society, and still others lived in feudal conditions. The last group included the peoples of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Transcaucasia. In the mid-1920s, their total population was about 30 million, or 20 per cent of the population of the Soviet Republic.

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These areas were poorly industrialised and the working class there was still very small numerically. Most of the working people here were peasants and artisans who were largely illiterate. The feudal-patriarchal way of life, the general social and economic backwardness and the extremely degrading position of women prevented them from realising the significance of all that was new and progressive in the Socialist Revolution. This is why many of them did not have enough strength to make a clean break with the past. In addition to that, the national bourgeoisie, local bands of counter-revolutionaries, and the reactionary clergy enjoyed the support of the imperialists and put up overt and covert resistance to the newly established government by the people.

The First All-Russia Congress of Women-Workers and Women-Peasants.

The Setting-up of Women's Departments

After the victory of the Socialist Revolution, the Party was faced with the task of organising women as a political and economic force. It was necessary to help them overcome their social backwardness and enable them to raise the level of their political activity, to draw them into the job of building a new society and defending it against counter-revolutionaries. The First All-Russia Congress of Women-Workers, called on Lenin's initiative, was to deal with all these crucial problems. The Congress was held in Moscow between November 16 and 21, 1918; that was a difficult time for the Soviet Republic. The Civil War was at its height, the country was encircled by the enemy, transportation was

in disarray, and: foodstecks were low. The Commu-
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nist Party regarded the First All-Russian Congress of Women-Workers as an event of tremendous political significance.

The Congress Was preceded by a great deal of exhaustive preparatory work. The Central Committee of the Party set up a special bureau which was responsible for this work. The bureau was made up of twenty-one women-activists. All of them were experienced revolutionaries and leaders of the women's movement. The bureau, which was made up of three commissions—an organisational commission, a literary commission and an economic commission—was to complete its preparatory Work and then convene the Congress within a month's time.

At the First meeting of this bureau, on October 14, 1918, its members decided to send political agitators to arrange for the election of delegates to the Congress. These political agitators called meetings of . women-workers and peasants. They made speeches and introduced women to the tasks to be carried out at the coming Congress and helped them elect delegates.

Quotas of representation were set: an organisation with up to 200 women was to send One delegate, of up to 800—two delegates, and more than 1,000—three delegates.

The preparation for the Congress and the election of women-delegates stimulated the political awareness and class consciousness of women-workers and peasants.

The enormous amount of attention which the working women in the country gave to the Congress can be illustrated by the fact that, instead of 500 delegates as earlier expected, a total of 1,147 women had come from all over the country: representatives of women-workers at factories and plants, and of 20

women-peasants. Those among the women who served in the Red Army sent their representatives too. The delegates to the Congress heard and discussed the reports "The Communist Party and the Working Woman", "The October Revolution and Woman", "The Tasks for Women-Workers in Soviet Russia", "The Family and the Communist State", "The Working Woman and the Front-Line", "The Problems Relating to Social Security", "The Tasks of Socialist Education", "The World Revolution and the Working Woman", "The Church and the State", "Working Woman at Home and in the National Economy", and some other reports. This is what was said in the report "The October Revolution and Woman": "The main task is to succeed in defending the gains of the Revolution. This task can be accomplished by the common efforts of the entire working class. That is why the working woman must become a revolutionary fighter and take part in every aspect of this struggle. The second task confronting women-workers is that of building a new socialist society. And the third task is to strengthen the bonds of internationalism and proletarian solidarity of the working people of all countries."

The report "The Family and the Communist State" called upon the women-delegates to set up a network of public services facilities—canteens, kindergartens and nurseries—which could help women become equal builders of a new society. The report "The Tasks of Socialist Education" gave a great deal of attention to the advantages of the public upbringing and education of children. Of special political importance at the Congress was

Lenin's speech which assumed the form of a major policy-making document. He said that the best way to achieve the complete emancipation of women was

The First All-Russia Congress of Women-Workers adopted a number of important decisions. For example, its resolution on the report "The Tasks for Women-Workers in Soviet Russia" read in part: "Women-workers have no tasks concerning women only: their tasks are no different from the general tasks of the proletariat, because the conditions for the emancipation of the working women are the same as the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat as a whole. The main task for women-workers is to be actively involved in all aspects of the revolutionary struggle both at the front and in the rear." The resolution on the report "Working Woman at Home and in the National Economy" called upon women to work actively for the setting-up of public catering facilities, laundries, Work-shops, artels for making garments, for washing linen and cleaning flats, etc. The resolution "On the Organisational Question" emphasised the need to set up special bodies attached to Party committees to conduct propaganda and political agitation among women. The text of the resolution read in part: "Their lesser political awareness and the special position they hold in society and in production make it imperative to step up political agitation and propaganda among women." To accomplish this task, the First All-Russia Congress of Women-Workers proposed that the Central Committee of the Communist Party set up a special commission for

Similar commissions were to be set up at local Party organisations. Moreover, the Congress pointed out that the main goal of the entire political agitation and propaganda work of the Party among women was to draw working women into practical task of building a socialist society. The First All-Russia Congress of Women-Workers gave a start to the practical emancipation of working women and opened the way for their participation in the struggle for a new life.

The commissions for propaganda and political agitation among women conducted mainly political instruction and general education: they organised women's meetings and rallies, set up circles of political agitators and propagandists, and circulated hooks and newspapers among women-workers and peasants. Taking into consideration the low levelef

literacy among women, they organised collective readings of newspapers and magazines, set up schools for working women at factories and plants and drew the more politically aware working women

into practical work at various departments in Soviets, trade unions and cooperative societies. Because of the changes in the organisational structure of Party committees, these commissions were rather short-lived and were soon transformed into women's committees operating under local Party organisations. The committees were divided into sections, each in charge of a particular task. This is why the commissions for propaganda and political agitation among women were turned into separate departments of Party committees for work among women (zhenskolskaya).

communist women's movement. The leaders of the
branches of the Central Committee were at the
some time members of the International Women's
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reporLs not only on various political subjects but
also on the pracLicnl 11cLiviLy (11' local bodiesMpow-
cl, of mule unions 11ml cooperative socicLics. Such
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nu-uljngs were usually quite stormy especially when
famine, economic dislocation and'lhu plight of chil-
11rl'n wurn being discussed.

The social :1va practical work oi the women-
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1918-1920. Working women at a munitions plant during the
Civil War

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1919, Women sowing linen for the soldiers of the Red Army

The first woman cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova
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lhc 'l'urru-slun Fruul, who spoke nlmul, Um our-

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rent situation in the country. He called upon the women-delegates to join in the nationwide struggle to eliminate economic dislocation and to lead a new and better life.

The First Congress of the Women of Azerbaijan opened in Baku on February 5, 1921. It was also attended by the leaders of the Party and government of the Azerbaijan Republic. In a message sent to the presiding committee of the Congress, the women-delegates wrote: "We Muslim women hope that the Congress will ban the practice of marrying young girls of 9-12 years of age when they are just beginning to mature."

Delegates to the Congress declared that they regarded Soviet power as their protector and took a pledge to defend the Revolution to the end. The Congress adopted the text of a message to all women of the East and sent a letter to Lenin. The delegates who were elected to the All-Russian Congress of the Women of the East were presented with a velvet red banner to be passed on to the Russian women-workers. The banner had these words embroidered in gold: "The proletarians of all countries, unite! Women-workers of Red Russia, we have taken the road you have shown us. And there is no force in existence that could make us swerve from it!"

Women's meetings, congresses and conferences which were held all over the country in every region and republic discussed local questions too. The underlying common feature of all these meetings was a desire to tell the women of the East about their rights, awaken in them feelings of responsibility and dignity and call them to the building of a new life.

One of the first frank and open conversations on the topic was the Communist Party and a large audience of women from the Soviet Union. Although, in spite of the fact that the All-Russian Congress of the Women of the East did not take place in Moscow in 1921 because of local shortages (severe crop failure), the tremendous agitation and propaganda work carried out by the Party in preparation for it was highly successful. On their return home, the delegates to the local congresses popularized Lenin's ideas, fought for Soviet rule and for the emancipation of women.

Ignorant until the fact that the congress in Moscow had been postponed, many of the delegates (78 in all)---Uzbek, Tajik, Kirghiz and Turkmen women met in Tashkent early in June 1921. In order not to disappoint them the Central Committee of the Party invited them to Moscow as guests. That was the first time a large group of women from the East had visited the capital of the Soviet state. There they met their hosts, the working women of Moscow, and took part in the proceedings of the Second International Conference of Women-Delegates. The greatest event of all for the Uzbek-Tajik-Ukrainian was their meeting with Lenin. One of them was Salemat Dzhabhengerova who wrote: "We were weeping for our happiness and pledged that we would forever be loyal to Lenin's wishes."

In September 1920, the 1st Congress of the Peoples of the East was held in Baku. For the first time in history, women took part in a public function of this sort alongside men. The Congress was attended by about two thousand representatives of not only the Soviet republics but also at many foreign countries--Afghanistan, Egypt, India, China, Korea--

ea, Persia, Turkey, Japan and others. Fifty-five women delegates attended, three of whom were elected to the presiding committee.

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Different Forms of Work Among Women

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h -le.

At these public meetings different problems of
international and domestic life were discussed. At
the meetings of peasant women the participants
discussed their standards of living, heard about
the life of workers in cities and about the activities
of local authorities. Many public meetings were de-
voted to the life of working women themselves.
These often took the form of lectures on subjects
suueh as 'tWomen and Soviet Rule", t'What Soviet
Rule Has Given Working Women", "XVomelfs Role
in the Building of a New Life", and so on. Such
meetings were very often addressed by prominent
state figures, leading Party functionaries and oili-
cials from zhenotdels.

In those first years after the Revolution, the
Communist Party and the Soviet state exercised
their inHuence on the minds of women also through
the distribution and circulation of leaflets. Such
leaflets were issued on the occasion of the March
the Eighth holiday, in connection with the elections
to local and central Soviets, the election of women
to the conferences Ol' wumen-delegates, and the hold-
ing of motheraud-child protection weeks. The is-
sue of leaflets was also prompted by the changing
situation at the trontline of the Civil War.

Another popular form of activity among women
in those years was excursions undertakenbywom-
en-workers to other cities and factories, to child-
care centres and museums. Such excursions broad-
ened the cultural and political horizons of working
women, enabled them to exchange their profes-
sional experience and their experience as voluntary
social workers, and fostered in them feelings of
cnlleclivism.

In rural areas a popular form of propaganda
was talks with peasant women right in their

homes, at village libraries (called Readerst Huts),
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ill recl'eati011-all11-reading rooms (known as Red Corners) and in conununes.

Another 101111 01 political agitation among peasant women was llorse-llrawll vans carrying agitation literature, posters 111111 gramopheues. 111 these vans agitators tolll'e11- villages, organising public meetings, talks, even theatrical 11el'iol'11lances. They also often helped the families 01 R011 Armymen with farm work.

Working Women's Days were yet another form of work among women. These were held once a month when the entire organisational and political agitation personnel of cities and towns went to iac-tories and plants which employed predominantly women. On the very shop 11001 (in the intervals between shifts) they held talks with women. gave them lectures and reports in the R011 Corners and in the canteens and organised 111111110 meetings. Later, similar iDays" W010 held for peasant women mostly at local Readers' 1111ts

An illlp01ta11t 101111 01 work the idea of which was to make women more active socially, was the organisation and holding of International Women's Day celebrations 011 March 8. Every year, at the time of preparation for this holiday, the Central Committee 01 the'Party circulated letters, in which it stxessed the significance of the holiday and offered advice on the best way to observe it. Evelyn holiday was 110111 111111el certain careiully selected slogans to suit the occasion. When the Civil War was at its height, the slogan of the day was "Strengthen the flont and 101101 the onslaught of the bourgeoisie!" Alter the war the slogan was 111111 working people must pool their eiierts t0 rehabilitate the national economy". There Were other slogans too, calling for the struggle against famine, against women's 1111e1111110ynlent, for raising cultural

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111111 political standards 111111 11111110111111; the skills of wollle11-wnr1cel's all11' peasants, and for building eh111-eare centres. The Women's Day celebrations 011 March 8, 192/1, the 11151. 01 their 1111111 in B1)- 1111ara, were preceded by the opening 01 a women's 011111, with a large number 01 women attending the eel'el110ny. At that meeting, twelve women were all-mitted to the Party

The second category-organisational 111111 educational forms and methods of work among women-included women's congresses, conferences of non-Party women-werfers and womeu-peasants, meetings of wnnen-(lelegates. etc. These terms 01 work also Iraised the level of social activity among women.

. Working women developed the ability to absorb political information. voice their opinions, evaluate events'taking place alolln11 them and showed a llesile to take part in social activities.

Alongside the c01lielences 01 women delegates an ill1111111ta11t 101e was played by women's meetings and congresses. Their task was to examine the attitudes 111111 wishes oi w11111e11-wol'11el's and peasants, to draw them into participating in the running 01 the state and in economic reconstruction. The meetings were 110111 at different levels, with their delegates representing provinces, districts, cities, regions, small rural areas andindividualfactories. At their meetings the representatives 01 provinces, cities'all11 districts raised questions of general political sigr11itleall1cez'i'1111e International Position and the Situation at Home", "Assistance to the Front", "Soviet 111110 and Women", HThe Party and Its

ka Among 1V1)111011", ' '1On the Elimination of 11-
liteiacy' Among Women" .
'ihe factory meetings discussed questions relating
to the life 01 wemell-wel'kers, the economic perfor-
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mance of a certain factory or plant, the raising of labour productivity, labour protection for women. vocational training, the improvement of the women-workers' life at home, the functioning of child-care centres, etc.

Meetings of peasant women discussed problems which concerned them and which reflected the general conditions of life in villages: "The Policy of the Party and the State in the Countryside", "The Peasant Woman and the Food Question", "Efforts to Draw Peasant Women into the Committees for Peasants' Mutual Assistance", "Peasant Women and Cooperative Societies", "The Organisation of Cottage Industries", etc.

To enlighten the women of the nomadic peoples and tribes of Central Asia, Siberia and the Far East, wide use was made of non-Party meetings of women. As a rule, such meetings discussed relevant and important questions and made practical decisions: to eliminate illiteracy, to join a cooperative society, to keep one's home clean. Such meetings were held once a month with a wide-ranging education programme for women. The programme dealt with the advantages of the settled way of life, the social equality of women and men, mother-and-child care, etc.

The significance of the congresses and meetings of women-workers and women-peasants lay not only in the fact that they stimulated the social activity of women and organised them for constructive efforts, but that these congresses and meetings helped them develop their class awareness and turn them into politically conscious builders of the new state, the defenders of revolutionary power.

The principal mass organisational and educational form of work among working women was general meetings of women-workers and women-peasants.

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the most accessible, the simplest and the most comprehensible form of organisation, because they were held, as a rule, at their workplaces, in their own collective, among people they knew and in familiar surroundings. For the women, they were

participants in such general meetings showed a common concern for everything they saw and heard and expressed their opinions. Meetings like these taught women how to organise themselves, share their experience with one another and foster collectivism. At these meetings the women discussed not only political problems, but also questions relating to the everyday life of their factories and work collectives. Such general meetings, with their heated debates on important questions, were held regularly, not less than once a month. There was very often a large number of men who also attended the women's general meetings.

The Saturday group was voluntary work on Saturdays and Sundays (subbotniks), different kinds of "Weeks", participation in the nationwide drive against famine, epidemics, etc. Men and women participated together in voluntary work on Saturdays and Sundays. In addition, there were other undertakings, such as "Peasant Weeks", "Labour Protection Weeks", "Child Weeks", and so on. Women sewed garments for the Red Army, washed linen at military hospitals, orphanages and child-care centres. At such subbotniks women behaved like real masters of the new society. They felt increasingly responsible for what was going on. They became more and more aware of their links with

the collective, of their own responsibility for the Soviet state. This was particularly valuable, not to say unusual, because the only responsibility that women had been taught to have ever centuries was for their families.

Working women showed their enthusiasm by participating in all kinds of "Weeks". For example, a "Week" of transport was proclaimed in a district, or in a province, or even in the whole country, and the entire labour of that district or province was poured into the job of restoring transport, building roads, etc. These "Weeks" had two aspects: economical and political (a Week of transport, agriculture, education) and military and political (a "Week of the Front", a "Week of Assistance to Wounded Red Armymen").

More and more women were drawn into participating in the solution of acute social problems, such as the struggle against famine and economic dislocation. Women-workers and women-peasants helped to collect, supervise the packaging and distribution of food parcels. Women went from house to house, collecting grain, bacon, wool, and canvas. They adopted children evacuated from famine-stricken areas, and set up child-care centres. Women organised "Weeks of Saving Children", women's subbotniks, and special detachments to combat child vagrancy. -

All these activities enabled women to become active participants in the building of a new life. II. is no accident, that, they were called "methods of political agitation -by practical example", because they helped find those women who were talented organisers. draw them into public affairs and involved in them a sense of discipline and responsibility. . - i

The Party developed special forms of work among the women of the Eastern regions of the country. The old Oriental customs prohibited women to appear in public places. This is why the conferences of women-led delegates gained only limited popularity before immediately after the Revolution. ; , , 'ho most

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The forms of organisation for Eastern women were women's clubs, house-solar women-peasants' (lchmy) and the Hod Yurtas (tents made out of felt).

Muslim women very willingly joined in the activities of the clubs specially organised for them. Significantly, their husbands, fathers and brothers allowed them to do so because these clubs were exclusively for women and no men were permitted. Membership was open to working women alone and only on the recommendation of two women-activists. Club work was organised on a voluntary principle, and only the heads of the clubs received salaries. These clubs usually had several sections: production, political education, juridical, and mother-and-child sections. The production section organised vocational schools and circles, workshops and artels. At these artels women sewed garments, made knitted goods, carpets, shoes, and bound books. They were also taught how to make clothes, knit, and were instructed in the principles of stenography, typing and stenography. In this way they earned some money, although the purpose of the clubs was primarily to provide women with working skills which would later enable them to join in socially useful work in industry and farming.

The political education sections of the clubs organised lectures and public meetings devoted to revolutionary questions and revolutionary holidays. They also set up Young Pioneer organisations, Young Communist League organisations, schools and circles for political education. In this way the women of the East were taught the ABC of politics, were

introduced to the tasks of socialist construction and to the international situation and history of the movement of woman-workers.

Under the aegis of them: on the one hand there were schools for combatting illiteracy, as well as schools and courses for training, and for the formation of societies and clubs. Courses were also provided for, primary school teachers. There were music, drama and literary groups, and also groups for training journalists for local newspapers. Club members issued news bulletins, showed films and organised amateur art activities. Some of them had amateur theatres, and all of them had libraries.

The juridical section provided legal advice, organised lectures on the rights of women and ran special groups where women could study law.

The mother-and-child sections set up maternity health centres, nurseries and kindergartens, as well as small clinics, courses for obstetricians and workers in pre-school health-care centres, and provided medical advice on hygiene and sanitation.

In 1925, there were 54 women's clubs. In the out towns these clubs enjoyed different opportunities in the choice of personnel and the provision of premises and finances. The first women's club was set up in Tashkent. In a large building selected for a club, a school, a library, a health centre for children, a garment-making workshop, an assembly hall, and premises for the various groups were housed. The courtyard was somewhat unusual, with four one-storey houses forming a square. All the windows and doors faced the courtyard. The only entrance to the courtyard from the street was through the gate, which provided access to the premises of this vast complex. On April 21, 1924, the club opened its doors to visitors. But no visitors came. The club mounted an agitation campaign to explain to local women the idea and purpose of the club. Eventually, three Uzbek women weekly entered the courtyard. They hid their faces,

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wearing headscarves (veils) and their faces only after they had made sure there were no men around.

More women came. And soon the club was buzzing like a beehive with activity. Every morning young Uzbek women came with their children for medical advice. The school for combatting illiteracy functioned in the evenings. Many women came to the library where they listened to books and newspapers being read out to them. The roof of one of the houses of the complex was taken up by an atelier for making blankets. The assembly hall was getting more and more crowded by the day, so that now general meetings of the club members (more than 700 in all) were held in the courtyard. The club also had an elected board. All work at the club was divided among its three sections, each headed by a member of the board. The club had its own conference of Women-Delegates, a Young Communist League organisation (whose members were girls), and a Young Pioneer group (also made up of young girls).

The clubs trained a large number of women for work in the national economy, at health-care centres and at hospitals. Many women, members of such clubs, were later sent to advance their knowledge at the so-called workers' faculties organised by higher education establishments, also at schools where personnel for local Party organisations and Soviets were trained. Some women-activists at the (1925) took part in the

The women in Soviet Central Asia which enjoyed special popularity were the so-called Houses for Women set up for peasants who, for some

reason, had mUVUtl to the city for permanent residence. Enoh woman who came here from her (utl (a village) conhl live at such a house for two weeks. One oi the l'n'sl. things she had to do was to

g0 lu the hath heuse, where she was issued a Set of clean clothes and umlerweur. She couhl attend lectures and talks unil go to the local school for combutting illiteracy uml, it she chose, to classes for garment-nmhing. 11' she came with a child (or children) she could use the nurseries, u play-ground and medical facilities. The House for Dale lean. Women 3150 provided talks on hygiene and sanitation. Attached to the house was a model farm plot where wemen-peasnts ceuhl improve their knowledge of farming.

One of the varieties ef women's clubs were rec-reatien-undd'eailing rooms (Red Corners) in cities and lteatlers' Huts for women in the country. All the work here was curried out by volunteers. Menl-bers of these clubs set. up their conferences of wom-eu-delegutes, who held their meetings at the rec-reatiou-uml-reutliug rooms. The women attended lectures on political and popular sciences. They er-gnnised public reading sessions where they eouhl hear synopses of newspapers and political journals. There were schools for cembutting illiteracy, theatric-ul groups and choirs at these clubs.

The so-cnllletl ltetl Yurtas, another type of club, were set up for the nenmdic population of the Eastern regions of the country. They operated in accordance with a special programme which includ-ed reading classes, instruction on basic hygiene and professional zulvice to livesteeek-hremblers. The staff ut the Red Yurtas was made up 01' :1 political agi-tator, a wemun-teucher and a doctor. The inventory included a film projector, a sewing machine, a milk separator, medicines and other articles. The zhcnut-del of the Central Committee of the Party recom-mended: "The work of the Red l'nrla must concen-trate on the problems of sanitation uml hygiene, and 'arieus economic problems. Political uml legal 42

questions Shtlllllti he regarded us 01' secondary im-portance and should he discussed only when they are relevant to the life of the nomadic woman her-self."

The HUtl Yurtus organised liteetings, and center-enees et' wemen-tlelegzttes held their sessions here. The activists of the lhetl Yurtas helped publish wall newspapers. All these :wtivities-lectures, talks, work in political groups, the reading aloud of books, magazines and newspnpers-served to introduce nomadic women to the achievements of the Soviet slate, the life illllll work of the Party and the Young Cenmmnist League, The lied Yurla drew the no-mmlic women into the work oi the Soviets and vo-luntary organisations. Women active in the work otrthe Red Yurtu. tater often joined the ranks of the 'nrty er the Young Communist League.

The women's clubs, the Housesl'eL'IJc/L/t'anWom-en, the lied Corners :llltl the Red Yurtas carried out :1 great (leul 01' work in the Eastern regions of the ceunlry explaining to millions ul' illiterate and oppressed women the nature of revolutionary change. and turned them into active builders of a new society.

Women Defend Soviet Government

After the victory ()I' lhe.Socialist ltevolutien, the ceunter-revelutieuries in the country, with the sup-port 01' foreign imperialists, waged a Civil War against the young Soviet Republic. That war lasted three years: from 1918 to 1920. Lenin praised the courage, fortitude and heroism of working women in the years 01' the war. In an address toacounter-cute 01' working women in Moscow on September

23, 1019, he spoke about the role working women
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played in that war: "Women can work under war conditions when it is a question of helping the army or carrying on agitation in the army. Women should take an active part in all this so that the Red Army sees that it is being looked after, that solicitude is being displayed."

Right after the formation of the Central Committee of the Party particular importance in its work was attached to the search for different ways of drawing women into the job of helping the Red Army. This question was repeatedly raised at sessions of the Zhenotdel and discussed at many meetings held by women. The special column run by Pravda was devoted to the life of working women. In some issues this "working woman's page" was taken up entirely by information about the assistance that working women gave to the Red Army.

Of special importance was the training of medical nurses for the Red Army. They were mostly crash courses, which meant that in a short period of time the future held hospital and practical nurses had to be given instruction not only in medicine but also told about the goals and policy of the Soviet government, the role of different classes and states, and how social changes were taking place in the country. These lectures were built on the principle of class analysis of events and social phenomena. Here are some of the lectures which were read at the Courses for Red Nurses in different cities:

"Why Are We Fighting?", "The Emergence and the Significance of Our Fronts", "The Main Features of the Capitalist System, and the Class Struggle", "What Is Soviet Rule and How Is It Organised?", "How to Get the Best out of a Newspaper, a Leaflet, a Pamphlet and a Book".

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At one of its meetings the Zhenotdel of the Central Committee of the Party discussed the problem of military training for women (April 1920). The main report at this meeting was delivered by the Minister of Defence who spoke about the need to introduce universal military training for women. Afterwards, a circular and theses about universal military training for women were sent to all local Zhenotdels. The circular and theses also dealt with the problem of women's participation in the formation of the militia and the army. The circular read in part: "All girls and women are required to undergo general training and pre-draft instruction. Women must take charge of logistics, for which purposes they must gradually be drawn into the schools of universal military training. Party committees and Zhenotdels must send more active women to these military training courses." It was evident that only by winning the support of more and more working women, in town and country, for the cause the Red Army was fighting for, the Party could bring about the unity of the front and the rear, which was crucial for victory in the Civil War. These meetings and conferences of women-delegates and women's general meetings helped to draw them into work in support of the Red Army fighting at the front. They joined courses formed medical nurses, made underwear and knitted goods, and collected foodstuffs for the fighting men. Directing the work among different strata of women during the Civil War, the Party organisations gave priority to the job of explaining to them the nature and objectives of the war. The Party laid such emphasis on this work because many illiterate

and politically backward women failed to understand these things. The Party used all the available means of oral and printed propaganda and put

ciency was higher and more goods were produced. Therein lay the great economic importance of women's participation in socialist production. At the same time, it played an important social role, because it made women more active in the social and political spheres. Women, who were new joining trade unions and other public organisations, carried out socially useful assignments, and many of them were in various spheres of state power.

Women's participation in social production is a basis for establishing their genuine equality with men. Their work at factories and plants makes them equal members of the collective. Their wages make them economically independent, and their work receives social recognition and helps them harmoniously to develop their personality. The Party abided by these principles when it sought to draw women into socially useful production as soon as Soviet rule was established. It was necessary, however, for women to learn new trades and improve their industrial skills.

Women were able to improve their skills through vocational training programmes, individual and group apprenticeship and their promotion to jobs requiring better training. Young women were admitted to vocational schools in accordance with a fixed quota, i.e. a certain number of vacancies were reserved for women. This helped to draw women into the national economy and restore the industry ruined by the Civil War. Women worked at factories which produced goods necessary for the economic recovery of peasant homesteads: metal articles, textiles and household goods. This made it possible to increase the commodity turnover between state-run industry and agriculture, and led to strengthening of the union between the working class

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and the peasantry, and the consolidation of the people's power.

It would have been impossible to draw women into social production without creating the conditions which would allow them to hold a job and have a family. From the first days of the Revolution the Soviet state showed great concern for mothers and their children. But the issuing of revolutionary decrees on mother-and-child protection was not enough. It had to be backed up by practical deeds.

In 1919, a so-called scientific and organisational commission was set up at the People's Commissariat for Social Security which was responsible for mother-and-child institutions. This scientific and organisational commission included medical experts who helped organise mother-and-child care centres, define their tasks and establish standards of nutrition. In spite of the tremendous difficulties caused by the Civil War, a total of 1,500 mother-and-child care centres were set up in 1919 and 1920: children's nurseries, mother-and-child homes, medical advice centres, baby-food distribution centres, homes for parentless infants (orphanages) and maternity homes.

Vagrancy among children was a terrible problem in the conditions of economic dislocation, and the Party gave top priority to combatting it through local committees. They found new premises for child-care centres and provided equipment, furniture and food. The women-delegates of the committees occupied the mansions belonging to factory owners who had fled the country after the Revolution and opened

nurseries and kindergartens there; they organised subbotni/cs, washed and cleaned, and redecorated the premises, etc.

At first, many mothers (who) not trust, the nurseries with their babies. And in this, too, the women-delegates were the first to help. They taught their own children to the nurseries and organised a rota system. Mothers could see for themselves how their children were fed, taken for walks and put to bed, and soon after, they themselves supported the idea of nurseries. There was an acute shortage of personnel-teachers and nurses-for children at such centres. In Moscow special courses were opened for training personnel for mother-and-child care centres. Such courses were attended by 85 persons who had come from different towns and cities of Russia. Similar courses were set up for medical nurses to be employed at child-care institutions. Instruction at such courses was provided by the best medical experts in the country.

Cultural, Social and Political Work I

Among Women

It was impossible to build a new life, raise children and restore the national economy without eliminating illiteracy, without the political education of women themselves and without raising their general cultural standards. In the early years of Soviet government the women, who constituted half the working population in the country, were almost totally illiterate. In 1921, a total of 756 out of every thousand women could neither read nor write. Lenin called illiteracy the second enemy of the Party and the people. Speaking at the All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments in October 1921, he said: "So long as there is such a thing as illiteracy in our country it is too much to talk about political education. This is not a political

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prerequisite; it is a condition without which it is useless talking about politics. An illiterate person cannot discuss politics, he must first learn his ABC. Without that there can be no politics; without that there are rumours, gossip, fairy-tales and prejudices, but not politics."

Thus, the cultural revolution in the Soviet Republic began with the elimination of illiteracy. On December 26, 1919, the Soviet government adopted the decree On the Liquidation of Illiteracy Among the Population of the Republic. In order to co-ordinate this work more effectively, the People's Commissariat for Public Education set up an All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy in July 1920. Acting under this commission was a body known as a standing conference which was made up of representatives of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee, representatives of the government for work in rural areas, of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League and the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions. Some time later, in November 1920, the Chief Department for Political Education was organised under the aegis of the People's Commissariat for Public Education. This department was headed by Nadezhda Krupskaya, and conducted education work among the adult population of the country. A large number of reading-and-writing centres sprang up everywhere in the Soviet Republic. At these centres both men and women were taught to read, write and do sums. There were also a large number of elementary schools with a two-year programme for adults, and schools for illiterate people which were run much on the same lines as primary schools. The highest link in the system of adult education was schools for advanced education.

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The work of many schools and reading-aml-wrting centres was organised in such a way that students graduated either on March 8 or May 1, or on Revolution Day. The zhenotdcls used these events for attracting more women to these schools. At the graduation ceremonies the women were elected to the presiding committee of the meeting. They also received honorary certificates and bonuses. In their farewell address they talked about their studies and urged illiterate women to sign up for a course at these schools. And many women did. It was taken into consideration that women busy with their children and housework would find it hard to leave their homes and attend classes. This was why those women who studied at school enjoyed the privilege of placing their children into nurseries and kindergartens. In addition, the zhenotdcls organised instruction for women, especially peasants women, at their homes, instead of schools. This system was called the system of individual-aml-group education. The most advanced intellectuals and activists were engaged in the campaign to combat illiteracy: teachers, club workers, employees of cultural centres and libraries, and ordinary activists who could read and write. The Party issued a slogan: "One literate person should teach ten illiterate people".

The Party's work to combat illiteracy among working women was of great political significance. This is what a woman-worker wrote in a magazine article: "In the old days we were crushed, drained of strength and stupefied. We had no education. Now we have an education, we have honours, and we know that we are much needed and appreciated members of society. This is what our Party has done for us. Our Party is the first to have given us knowledge and power. We must live up to its

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expectations. This is our Party and we shall stand by it."

Combating illiteracy among women was the basis of the Party's cultural and educational work, and the schools for the elimination of illiteracy were one of the ways it was carried out. There were other forms of educational work with women, with a special role played by the earlier mentioned clubs in cities and the Red Clubs' Huts in rural areas. Work at these clubs was organised in such a way that women-workers and women-peasants could not only take up various cultural activities in their spare time, but also receive general educational training; the clubs were regarded as an important means of political influence on working women, which was taken into account by the zhenotdcls. Working through the clubs and village libraries the zhenotdcls, together with the trade unions, Young Communist League and cooperative societies, drew women into schools for the elimination of illiteracy, groups for political education, literary clubs, "Book Friends", societies and groups for mother-and-child care.

Women had their own publications which played an important role in their political and general education. In the early years of Soviet rule the magazines Rabotnitsa (Working Woman), Rabotnitsa i Krestyanka (Woman-X'Worker and Peasant), Delegat (Delegate), and the Krestyanka (Peasant Woman) were of particular importance in this respect. Central and local newspapers run special columns for working women in the town and country. These

columns reflected various aspects of their economic and family life, the part they played in industrial and agricultural production, and socially useful activities. These columns also carried articles on the upbringing of children, the family, everyday life

at home, etc. As time progressed many women started to contribute to these magazines and newspapers.

An important part in heightening the political awareness of women was played by Party-and-political education at a time when the country was short of food, clothing, fuel and other necessities. Working people received small food rations. While every pair of shoes and every square yard of cloth had to be distributed among those who were most in need. Women also met to discuss whose child needed hospital treatment most. This was why the political awareness of women played such an important role.

Among the mass forms of political education of the working women in the town and country were the schools of political science. These were attended by both men and women who studied the ideas of scientific communism, the policy of the Soviet state, Lenin's works and the Party Programme.

There were also political education groups organised specially for women. They studied the fundamentals of the economic policy of the state, of the trade unions, the women's and the youth movements. The Zhenotdels also encouraged women to study at political schools, Soviet-and-Party schools, and those who did particularly well were sent to higher Party schools and political universities in big cities. Study in groups and political schools heightened the interest of women-workers and women-peasants in political science, made them more active, and gave them a taste of social work. These women who had some political education often became propagandists themselves and joined the Party. The high political awareness of women made it possible to put into effect the plan for work in Party and government.

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Working selflessly, women helped to accomplish the arduous tasks facing the young Soviet state. The Party's work among women in the early years of Soviet rule laid a solid foundation for their subsequent mass participation in the building of socialism. Without this initial work to establish equality between working men and women, we would not have been able to achieve the results we see today.

Woman in Advanced Socialist Society

The experience of the Soviet Union and the other countries of socialism show convincingly that in socialist society, where as a result of the elimination of the exploitation of man by man social equality among people has been established, men and women have genuinely equal rights. Under socialism women enjoy a full, varied and rich life.

An advanced socialist Society has all the possibilities for a woman to combine socially useful labour and her responsibilities as mother and wife with active political work.

The Soviet Union has the world's highest level of employment of women in social production. All women in this country are guaranteed the right to work on an equal footing with men. Moreover, women can do any work, except that which is detrimental to their health. At present, 93 per cent of all able-bodied women are employed in the national economy. Women, who constitute 51 per cent of all industrial and office employees, are responsible for a good half of the material and non-material wealth in this country. In this lies the basis for genuine equality between men and women in all

spheres of life. Social labour, for ile'pant, with its
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relations of social equality and collectivism which is typical of. socialist society, makes women more active in their particular professions, more mature and politically aware citizens, stimulates their creative talents and gives them a better understanding of their social duties and responsibilities. Socialism has drawn millions of working women into the affairs of state, into the solution of problems of great social importance. This was done via the Party and the Soviets, trade unions and other public organisations, via the press and nationwide discussions of laws and decrees. It was made possible by the entire socialist way of life in this country. In the last elections to the Soviet Parliament (March 1984) 492 women were elected deputies. This is more than the number of women MPs in the parliaments of all capitalist countries taken together. In the Soviet trade unions, women constitute 51 per cent of their total membership. Half the membership of the Young Communist League are young women. They also constitute more than 24 per cent of the Party membership. The 'present level of social and political activity of Soviet women bears out Lenin's words: "It is said that the best criterion of the cultural level is the legal status of women. This aphorism contains a grain of profound truth. From this standpoint only the dictatorship of the proletariat, only the socialist state could attain, as it has attained, the highest cultural level." One of the principal results of the solution of the question of women's role in society in the USSR is the emergence of a new social type of woman. A citizen with the same political and social rights as men, an active worker and social activist, and at the same time a loving mother and a sensitive educator, this is the make-up of the woman born of the Revolution. i

1932. The llyich collective farm in the Voronezh region.
A lesson at a reading-and-writing group
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1932. At a class of industrial drawing in Dnepropetrovsk
1931. Turkmenia. A Young
Communist League mem-
ber giving a lesson at a
reading-and-writing group
1931. The Bryansk region.
A woman collective farmer
learning how to read