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Flag hoisting at the Conference in Andhra, Ailamma sitting in the middle



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AICCWW Greets Women in Soviet Union on 7th November

THE All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) sends its warm greetings to women in Soviet Union on the memorable day, 7th November. The proletarian revolution emancipated the exploiting women in Russia from the feudal landlord bourgeois rule once for all, putting them on the equal footing with men in social economic and political field. The women in Soviet Union have achieved during last 40 years marvellous things in all the spheres, while women in advanced countries like Britain and USA have still to fight for equal remuneration, equal status and for employment. Lenin, the great, has correctly said that "Not a single bourgeois state, not even the most progressive, republican democratic state has brought about complete equality of rights — Bourgeois democracy is the democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, lavish promises and high sounding slogans about "freedom and equality", but in practice all this cloaks the lack of freedom and equality of women".

Soviet Women have made brilliant progress in every field. Some of the facts given here will confirm this. Women in Soviet Union constitute 53.3 per cent of the total population. There are 2417 women deputies in the Supreme Soviet, amounting to 36 per cent of the total number of deputies. In local Soviets of Peoples Deputies, there are 1382 women, 40 per cent of the total. The working women elected to trade unions bodies, the percentage is 59.5 to the total. 69 per cent are qualified doctors, 71 per cent teachers, 82 per cent in Health and Social services, 32.6 per cent women judges and 40 per cent scientists. Can any of the advanced capitalist country claim to be just nearer to these achievements? Mrs. G. Faraaro, the candidate for the Vice-Presidency for Democratic Party in the recent election in USA openly, declared that she might not get votes from men! In contrast to what is happening in Iran, Pakistan and other Muslim countries, with regard to women, the liberation and speedy progress of Muslim women in Uzbekistan, Tazikistan, Turkemania, is something to be thought of. In 1927 alone 100,000 women

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Struggles of Women Coir Workers in the Spinning Sector—1950-1970

Meera Velayudhan, Delhi

WITH the general political awakening in the 1950's isolated struggles broke out in the handspinning areas. Husk beaters (wage workers) in the yards of merchants were unionised. In April 1954, women coir spinners at Asramam (Quilon) went on a strike against lock outs, wage cuts and unfair profits by coir ratt owners. The struggle continued for 40 days. The ratt owners attacked the workers. The struggle then took a political overtone. Lakshmi Kalyani, the union managing committee member and two of her sons were attacked by hoodlums hired by the employers who were members of the Congress party. Lakshmi had opposed the Congress during the elections. A struggle committee of trade unions was formed to support the struggle and funds were collected for relief to the workers' families. A squad of five women workers visited other coir spinning areas to give publicity to their struggle.

Throughout 1954 struggles were waged for Bonus, D.A., Minimum Wages, for control over export of coir and against unemployment. Women participated actively in processions, strikes, satyagraha along with their children. In fact, women provided the leadership to these struggles under the coir workers federation. In 1955 January, the agricultural workers' joined the coir workers in their struggle for minimum wages and against wage cuts at Paravoor. These struggles led to the appointment of a Minimum Wage Committee by the state Government and the introduction of minimum wages in the handspinning sector in 1963. These rates were 70 per cent to 75 per cent above the older rates calculated to enable a family to earn a subsistence minimum for 2800 calories of per capita food and related needs.

The most intense struggle by women workers took place in the handspinning sector in Kandorssankadavu, a major fibre production centre in 1956. The struggle was against the large scale ratters' efforts to close their work yards and contract out the work. The women held

out for over a month in the face of starvation and state repression. On August 5th, three women satyagrahis were threatened by a toddy shop owner, also a Congress worker. Mass arrests were made. On September 20th, about 36 women holding babies in their arms, were put in police custody. Goondas were let loose by one rival INTUC Seva Dal. Volunteers from the women's organisations, youth gave their support to the women workers. The women vowed to struggle until death. Their militancy evoked state and national attention. Finally the case was sent for adjudication and the Government declared "freedom of trade" to be upheld and advised the workers to buy ratted husks and defibre them in their homes. In all, 106 women had courted arrest, 52 beaten by the police, four of them being above 60 years of age and 10 between ten to sixteen years age. Three were admitted to hospital with injuries.

Isolated struggles took place in 1957-58 for bonus and women took part actively in them. The demand for re-organisation of the coir industry arose in this period and the setting up of the coir Board and Coir Development Scheme (Central) were early forms of State Intervention and added yet another dimension to the struggles, struggles for minimum wages, against mechanisation and unemployment. In 1955-66 there were isolated struggles and also a general strike of 50,000 coir workers for wage increase and yet another struggle by women workers at Thrikadavur in October 1965.

From 1967 onwards with the formation of the United Front Government, the workers' struggles received its support and a Minimum Wage Committee was set up.

The early 1970s witnessed intense struggles for minimum wages. These included a general strike, stoppage of movement of goods, mass campaigns, picketing in the face of severe attack by the merchants/employers and their hirelings.

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In Memory of Ashoka Lata

Delhi Janavadi Mahila Samiti

THE Janavadi Mahila Samiti, Delhi paid homage to its first President Ashoklata Jain on the occasion of her first death anniversary on the 3rd October. At a small gathering, members of the Janavadi Mahila Samiti, along with comrades from the CPI(M), DYFI, CITU and the SFI offered floral homage. Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President, AIDWA recalled the contribution of Ashokalata to the democratic movement and to advancing the struggle for women's emancipation. Referring to Ashoka's fight against repression of the emergency days. Vimal Ranadive mentioned how Ashoka emerged from this struggle with a more grim conviction and commitment to struggle for equality and justice.

In memory of the then first President, Janavadi Mahila Samiti decided to hold an annual declamation contest for its members. For certain reasons, this year the contest could not be held on the 3rd October, but was successfully held on the 6th October.

The Janavadi Mahila Samiti organised on the 6th October a declamation contest to mark the first death anniversary of its late President, Ashoklata Jain. The contest will henceforth be an annual feature. "What is the need for a women's organisation?" was the subject of this year's contest. The programme began with Parcham paying homage with a song. After the election of a 3 member Presidium to conduct the programme, Brinda Karat General Secretary, spoke recalling the contribution of comrade Ashoka, she emphasised the importance Ashoka attached to ideological clarity and to political education of activists. Ashoka was a communist, and it was with this perspective that she sought to advance the struggle for women's emancipation. She said, noting that, her death had been a grave loss, a loss that we have felt constantly in the last one year. A 2-minute silence was observed. After this the contest began. A total of 28 members participated in the contest, 4 as individuals and the rest as teams representing different units of the Janavadi Mahila Samiti. Maimoona and Anju from the Vithalbhai Patel House unit set the ball rolling after which the other participants,

drawn mainly from the working class colonies of Delhi articulated discussion on the need for women to organise. Rajendri Devi from Mongolpuri, adjudged the best speaker spelt in lucid and simple terms the different forms of women's oppression. Aditi, from the central unit touched on the different spheres in which a woman faces oppression in society as a woman, as a citizen, and as a member of a specific class, and concluded that in order to face the organised strength of the oppressions in society it is essential that women organise to advance the struggle for equal rights. Nirmal Rana, a young working woman from Shakarpur referred to the discrimination women are subjected to from time of their birth. She also drew attention to the horrible practise of amniocentesis and abortions of female fetus which had come to light a few years ago and in the struggle against which the AIDWA had been in the forefront. Reena, also from the central unit recalled the harassment she had been subjected to on one occasion in her student days and the encouragement and strength she had received from her organisation, the SFI, to fight it. Kamlesh from Dakshinapuri noted that it was her involvement with the JMS which had given her the strength to voice her feelings and her thoughts on the issue, showing her a way out of the drudgery of everyday chores. Young Manju and Durgesh among others, elaborated on the need for organisation and organised struggle.

It was the enthusiasm of the younger participants that made the discussion alive and animated. Susheela and Kaushalya, school girls in their teens spoke with conviction on the issue. It was this sincerity of conviction, which marked the speeches as if the participants were expressing their innermost urge when they spoke one after the other on the absolute need and importance of organised struggle to advance women's rights.

The team from Shakarpur, in West Delhi won the best team trophy, with Rajendri Devi, Chanda from Jwalapuri, and Aditi winning the first, second and third prizes respectively. JMS President Indu Agnihotri summed up the discussion and gave away the prizes.

An Ad-hoc Committee of AIDWA Formed in Rajasthan

Sumitra Swami, Rajasthan

IN a meeting, attended by about 300 women, from most of the districts of Rajasthan, constituting working women, housewives, and women from Adivasi, an Adhoc committee of AIDWA was formed on 29th September 1984. Madhu Sethia was in the Chair. Vimala Ranadive, and Laxmi Saigal, both Vice-presidents of AIDWA were the main speakers. Devsena member of Kanpur J.M.S. also spoke in the meeting. Sumitra Swami explained the purpose of the meeting and told from how many districts women had come to attend, with the determination to have a state committee in Rajasthan.

Laxmi Saigal spoke about the present situation in the country when the prices were rising skyhigh, dowry deaths were on the increase and appealed to women to build up the organisation. Vimal Ranadive explained the present unemployment among women created by the economic policies of the Government which unless fought unitedly, more women would be thrown out due to mechanisation introduced by the Government.

A committee of 16 women was announced in the meeting, with Sumitra Swami as Convenor. Madhu Sethia in her concluding remarks assured that strong united women's organisation in Rajasthan would be built up in future.

Janawadi Mahila Samiti Ganganagar Brought Mother and Child Together

It was August 19th. A women's meeting was on at Kesaripur village. Suddenly, a young woman about 22-23 years old came running and weeping. Women startled with this, asked what happened to her. She said "My name is Daya. I married 6 years back. My parent's home is at Ganganagar and husband's at Kesaripur. My parents paid one lakh rupees in my marriage, but in spite of that the father-in-law and husband are harrasing me demanding for more dowry. They used to beat me and leave me in the jungle. Not only that, they would threaten

me that they would marry their son again. I got fed up and returned to my parents' house, with my son. My mother could not bear the shock and died. Now, when my son grew up 5 years old, my father-in-law, snatched my son forcibly from me." Daya said weeping, "I can not live without my son. I came to see him today. Somebody gave the news about this meeting and so I came with the hope that you would do something so that I would get my son back."

And, the decision was taken then and there to go to the house of Daya and demonstrate with the co-operation of DYFI. The demonstration went to the shop, where the father-in-law was sitting with the boy. As soon as the son saw the mother approaching, he ran and embraced the mother. The father-in-law started abusing Daya. But he could not succeed to take the son back since, the whole people started shouting at him. Daya narrated the whole story as to how they were treating her in the house, which prevented them to attack Daya and her son.

Now under the guidance of J.M.S. a case has been filed in the court, demanding protection to the child and return of the dowry.

(Contd. from page 3)

Since mid 1960s, mechanisation became an issue of struggle as it is even today. From 6 defibering mills in 1955 it rose to 400 in 1973. According to a Planning Board Report, defibering machines would displace 81,562 out of 1,12,000 manual workers involved in defibering. Such mills had been banned in Kerala except in Rubber.

Struggles broke out and reports mention a Luddite type of struggle in which defibering machinery was broken up by the women and thrown into the back waters.

The Tragic 'Manjushree' Case Reopened — Govt. of Maharashtra Yields

Sujata Dhawale

A thousand strong morcha of militant slogan shouting women marched through the streets of Bombay, demanding justice for all women in the reopening of the famous "Manjushree case". Similar morchas were winding their way through the streets of Beed and Sangli, two distant districts of Maharashtra, while in Pune, women staged a dharna, raising their voices from all corners of the state, for the same cause!

The above outburst came in the wake of the recent Supreme Court judgement of India in July '84, when the court acquitted Sharad Sarada, the husband of Manjushree Sarada, who was held guilty of the heinous crime of poisoning his wife, and had been sentenced by both the Sessions Court as well as the High Court of Bombay.

Acquitting a man who had been found worthy of Capital Punishment by two courts, the Supreme Court has set scot free this man giving him a fair 'benefit of doubt'. Allowing such 'benefit of doubt' may sound generous or magnanimous in the annals of law, but in actuality may become a very convenient escape route to all those who will persist in such fiendish activities as bride burning, dowry killings, rape and the already high rate of atrocities perpetuated will only rise.

Spearheading this massive protest, the MAHILA SANGHARSHA MANCH, within which the A.I.D.W.A constitutes a lions share, along with ten other womens' organisations, has pocketed a victory of enormous magnitude and immediate consequence, when as a sequel to the observance of protest day on 13th September, 1984, all over the state, the govt. of Maharashtra has yielded to this uproar.

On 19th Sept. '84 a delegation of the Mahila Sangharsha Samiti, led by Ahilya Rangnekar, Manju Gandhi, Mrinal Gore, Kusum Nadkarni, Nirmala Sathe, Ms Joshi and others, was assured by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, that the Govt. of Maharashtra would expedite the reopening and review of the case before a specially constituted bench of the Supreme Court of India, and the whole state machinery would be exerted towards this end

as per their demands.

In the memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, the women have also raised certain demands which will be relevant in safeguarding the interest of women and their freedom and their liberation in the near and distant future. These are as follows:

(1) Govt. of Maharashtra should immediately bring in force the 'Family Courts' about which the Parliament of the country has passed an act.

(2) The legal aid system for socially and economically backward people of the state must be properly propagated and implemented in the state.

(3) The govt. has issued special instructions to the police regarding the enquiry in the death case of newly married girls which requires thorough implementation.

(4) Smt. Shehnez Shaikh of Bombay, Smt. Syed of Pune, and Smt Mary Roy of Bangalore have challenged certain obnoxious practices carried on in the name of Muslim Personal law and the Christian Personal Law in the Supreme Court. In this case the Govt. of India is one of the respondents. We hope the Govt. of India shall adopt a sympathetic and progressive attitude towards these cases in the interest of the liberation of these women from social and religious oppression.

5. It is high time now that the Central Govt. should take adequate steps to pass a "Common Civil Code" in India.

The organisations which came together to press for the demands and secure this victory were:

(1) All India Women's Democratic Association (Bombay) (2) National Federation of Indian Women (Bombay) (3) All India Women's Conference (Bombay) (4) Forum Against Repression of Women (Bombay) (5) Samajwadi Mahila Sabha (6) Shraamjeevi Mahila Sabha (7) Dakshata Samiti (8) United Committee of North Bombay Womens Organisations (9) Stree Mukti Sanghatna (10) Centre for Women (11) Mounj Womens Associations.

Delhi Ruled by Gangsters for 4 Days

Vimal Ranadive

ALL India Democratic Women's Association along with NFIW, Mahila Dakshata Samiti and others visited jointly and individually some of the localities affected by the recent riot in Delhi which erupted after the dastardly assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi by her security guards. The massacre toll was more than 2500. The property looted, houses burnt, scooters, trucks, cycles destroyed in fire if accounted for will run into crores of rupees. The burning and killing started in the night of 31st Oct. After the news of Indira Gandhi breathing her last came to be known by the people, pre-planned attacks on a particular community, singly or jointly began.

Trilokpuri Block No. 32 was a scene of a complete devastation. Nobody survived. We were informed that more than 300 people were killed or burnt, and their property looted. We were told that the mob came from outside and some from neighbouring areas. We could not continue to walk without coming across the broken glass, burnt scooters, human bones and flesh, blood still sprayed in the verandas or the walls. The Kalyanpuri Block No. 11 and 13 where according to the eye witness more than 70 Sikhs were killed, many houses were gutted with fire. In one room in the block No. 13, twelve people including seven women and children were burnt. This happened when they were sleeping in the night.

Nambi, a young woman in House No. 34 having four children could not be consoled. Her husband and two brothers were killed in front of her eyes. Nanti Devi, wife of Gajjan Singh narrated to us that her husband was killed first and then burnt. The cruel, act of killing and then cutting of the finger which bore the golden ring also was there. The ring was stolen.

It was reported to us that there were some cases of molestation of women and girls' abduction to nearby villages, like Chillagaon, Kondli, Dalupura, Ghazipur, etc. Gurdial (32/117) who was interviewed by Susheela Gopalan and myself, with her hand in bandage due to frac-

ture, told us how the rowdies entered her house, molested her in front of her own people and then killed all the male members of the family. Koushalya Devi (cl/36) from New Seelampuri when interviewed in Shahadara camp where more than 10,000 people were accommodated told us how the roudies threw acid on her and her husband was dragged out and killed. She with her 3 sons were in the camp, the girls' whereabouts was not yet known. The Muslim family who was her neighbour saved her and the sons hiding them in her house. In Shastri colony in old Faridabad, burning and looting of the affluent people was something unprecedented though no killings were reported. The houses of Chandrajit Kaur and Jaspal Kaur were totally brunt, the jewellery and clothes were looted. Small Engineering factories were in a mess due to burning. The help given by CITU workers and CPI (M) activists was recognised with gratitude everywhere.

Who were these people living in Kalyanpuri, Trilokpuri, Jahangirpuri and so on? They were Rikshaw pullers, small craftsmen, Dari and Charpayi makers, small hotel and shopkeepers. They were completely unaware that such thing could happen to them on 31st night or later on. Almost all the places we visited, the people stated their nightmarish experiences on those days, when Delhi administration had completely collapsed. Police were inactive. At many places, where Sikhs tried to defend themselves with their weapons, police disarmed them, arrested them and signalled the roudies to go ahead. The killing was meticulous, looting was orderly! The curfew declared on 31st October was nowhere to be implemented. The military was not given charge till 3rd November. So, Delhi was completely in the hands of gangsters, the police playing role of 'Watchers' and abettors.

The people, men and women in the camps, in the areas attached were bitter against many Congress (I) M.P. councillors, active congress leaders in their areas and rightly so for their dubious role. Many people named Sajjan Kumar, M.P. and some Congress

councillors openly, saying they were provoking the anti socials to loot and kill. Sikhs who were attacked, appealed to police nearly to help them which went unheeded. The anger of the people in the camp could be noticed when Sajjan Kumar, M.P. tried to give the people in Shyamlal College camps blankets and food packets which were rejected and thrown out despite the dire need for food and clothes. The people felt insulted.

The people in Shukurbasti camp where about 3000 were accommodated told us that when the attack started at 11 A.M. on 1st Nov., a known Congress(I) activist who lives in C-4, block accompanied the rowdies. In most of the places the rowdies came in trucks and tempoes. The Pradhans belonging to Congress (I) aided the gangs in Sultanpuri, Mongolpuri, Krishan Behari Budhavihar etc. One Mr. Gurubachan Singh Bedi the Nangloi Block Youth Congress(I) President said he was ashamed to belong the Congress party!

From the information collected in various places some horrible facts came to light. The houses burnt on 1st November in Shastri Colony, old Faridabad was done in a systematic manner. It was reported that a known Congress(I) fellow, in a two wheeler scooter would stop at a particular house belonging to a Sikh for a minute and go to the other house where another Sikh was staying. That was the signal for anti socials to approach the house by hundreds and thousands and burn and loot. In other Mohallas, where mixed population was staying leadership was given by activists of Congress(I) Party in those areas. Anti socials and police worked hand-in-gloves.

The people in the areas and camps expressed their deep gratitude towards the local residents, Hindu and Muslim brothers without exception. Without their active help, many people who have now survived, could not have been there they said. Block No. 20 in Kalyanpuri, the area we visited was a mixed locality. Both Hindus and Sikhs informed us that they did not allow anybody to enter No 20 block and touch a Sikh. They were proud of their role when No. 11 and 13, the adjacent areas were the scenes of morbid destruction and killings, heaps of hairs shaved and cut remaining entangled in every corner of the houses.

All of us came to the conclusion that the Delhi riot was not a communal riot between Hindus and Sikhs. They were also not spontaneous. The riots were planned by the anti-socials utilising the deep feelings of anger of the people who were grieved by the murder of the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. The anger was just. The communal minded police did not lift a finger to stop the marauders till strong steps by the military were taken. It was also a fact that the curfew and shoot at sight order remained on paper till Nov. 3. We were told at a number of places that SHO, local constables were totally inactive and at some places they abetted the rowdies.

AIDWA, CITU and other mass organisations did try to intervene wherever possible. The carnage was on such a huge scale, that without the Government's direct intervention with all its resources like giving security, medical help, food and clothings etc. the situation would not come to normal. In Jahangirpuri, Faridabad, Mongalpuri and other places Janawadi Mahila Samiti and CITU workers did render medical help and supplied some food, blankets etc. But that was very little indeed.

Active workers could meet the Sikhs in the areas, held meetings with them with available members of Parliament and helped them. In many places peace marches were taken out jointly by the people of Sikh and Hindu communities. The relief work by the Govt. is totally inadequate. Rehabilitation is the main point, the Government has to deal with this on an emergency level. The people lost everything including their business, their means of livelihood. The meagre compensation announced, the measures taken by the Government will not put them on their feet. The houses are to be repaired. The widows of block No. 32 Trilokpuri who have lost their husbands along with all the material, are to be rehabilitated, trained for some occupation so that they can start their life anew. At the same time, those guilty of the carnage would have to be brought to book and punished to create confidence among the affected people and all minorities.

It is true that this is a long process. The wounds and injuries during the present riot will take a long time to heal. The communal hatred created by vested interest and divisive
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Women's Organisations Appeal for Generous Contribution

ON the 5th of November, a delegation representing Women's organisations, including the All India Democratic Women's Association, Mahila Dakshata Samiti, National Federation of Indian Women, Centre for Women's Development Studies and others included Smt. Susheela Gopalan, M.P. Smt. Pramila Dandavate M.P., Smt. Vimla Farooqi, Vimal Ranadive, Dr. Vina Majumdar, Smt. Lotika Sarkar, Smt. Muthamma, Smt. Suman Krishna Kant and others visited the riot affected areas of Kalyanpuri, and Trilokpuri and also the relief camps at Shahadara and Vivek Vihar.

After speaking to the victims of the communal holocaust, it became evident that in this terrible carnage houses were looted and burned, and men of the Sikh Community were brutally beaten and murdered by burning, even the women and children were not spared. There were repeated complaints from the victims that the police force including responsible police officers either stood by and watch the rioting, the pillage, or actively abetted the mobs.

In Trilokpuri, Block 32, where the worst devastation and largest number of killings took place, we were informed that a few women were stripped and raped. In innumerable cases every male member of the family has been murdered.

In Kalyanpuri Block, 13, 12 Sikhs (including women and children) were burned to death inside one house. In Block 11 many men of the Sikh community were disarmed by the police, and taken to the police station on the pretext of protection, but in fact they were arrested and have still not been released. After this, the helpless families were attacked by mobs while the police either left the scene or sided with the mob. In Block 11 the surviving Sikh families are living in mortal terror of further attack and are in dire need of protection.

The complete collapse of the Delhi Administration and criminal negligence of the police cannot be condemned strongly enough.

The women's organisations have found the existing relief facilities in the camps to be woefully inadequate. The Red Cross whose

primary function is to be prepared to swing into action to render relief to disaster stricken populations on instant notice, was conspicuous by its absence. In the evening when the delegation met the Chairman of the Red Cross, we were aghast to hear from its Secretary General that the Red Cross "needed time" to organise such relief.

Warm clothes, medicines, food, water and other necessities must be provided immediately to the people in camps and Gurudwaras. Sanitation measures should be undertaken on an emergency footing in order to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. The condition in the biggest camp Shahadara is deplorably bad. In all the camps people cannot wash their clothes due to lack of water. Even for children there is no food or milk, not to say of warm clothes.

We appeal to all people to contribute generously with money, clothes, medicines etc. In this hour of distress our Sikh brothers and sisters should understand that other sections of Indian people are solidly behind them. We have to create confidence among the Sikh masses which they are gradually losing.

Asiad Stadia be Utilised for Relief Camps

On November 6, 1984 a delegation representing several women's organisations including the All India Democratic Women's Association, Mahila Dakshata Samiti, National Federation of Indian Women, Centre for Women's Development Studies and others including Smt. Susheela Gopalan, M.P., Smt. Pramila Dandavate, M.P., Smt. Vimala Farooqi, Smt. Suman Krishna Kant, Dr. Vina Majumdar, Smt. Lotika Sarkar, Smt. Muthamma and others met the Home Minister Shri Narasimha Rao to brief him of the woeful conditions in the relief camps in Hudlow Castle, Trans-Jamuna areas, Panjabi Bagh, etc. as also the sense of acute insecurity being experienced by the victims of the recent carnage in the camps as also where the carnage took place.

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Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian Let Us Unite

A huge procession of women belonging to Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians marched through South Calcutta, hand in hand with slogans "Unity Zindabad" "Hindu Muslim, Sikh, Christian, with all together, let us build unity". The procession taken out was the first of its kind, never seen before by people in Calcutta. On both sides of the roads thousands of people thronged to watch the procession, unprecedented before. Innumerable Sikh women participated. Women with small babies, with festoons, slogans marched in the streets with the slogan "Hindu Muslim Bhai Bhai, No Danga, want peace" the procession marched from Gariahat to Ravindra Sadan to South Calcutta. At the junction of the Gariahat, Kanak Mukherjee, the Vice-President of AIDWA while addressing the people reiterated the role of the people of West Bengal who always tried to keep unity and promised to do the same in future.

The meeting was convened by four Women's Organisations, namely, West Bengal Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti, West Bengal Mahila Samiti, Agradami Mahila Samiti and Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha. Kanak Mukherjee, Manju Gupta, Shyamali Gupta, Madhuri Dasgupta and others of Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti, Vina Guha, Bani Dasgupta, and Shikha Munshi of W.B.M.S., Aparajita, Geeta Mukherjee of Agradami M.S. and Geet Sangupta, Depti Chakrabarti and others of Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha led the procession. Sikh women hand in hand marched through along with others. The procession when came at Rashbahari Avenue stopped in front of the Gurudwara. The leaders of the women's organisations in their speeches expressed their fraternal and brotherly feelings while assuring the Sikh community full protection.

The women in the procession shouted slogans in Hindi also. "Bharatwasi Ko Ankho Ke Tara, Rashtriya Ekta Sabka Pyara" Imperialism, down down, secessionist forces, down down". The procession ended at Ravindra Sadan. The huge procession belonging to all the communities once more confirmed the role of the Left Front Government and the people

who are always in the forefront for National unity and integration.

Similar processions were taken out in all other parts of the state.

Smt. Sushila Gopalan, General Secretary of the AIDWA and Member of Parliament has Issued the Following Statement to the Press.

The All India Democratic Women's Association expresses its deep shock and its strong condemnation of the brutal and savage assassination of the Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi. The assassination is clearly the handiwork of terrorists and their backers, the imperialist agencies who are out to destroy the unity and integrity of our country. All patriotic and democratic forces have to be vigilant to foil the conspiracy of these heinous forces and to fight for the unity and independence of our country. We send our deep condolences to her bereaved family.

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forces among the various sections of the people is taking a serious turn in many states. Consistent efforts by the left and secular parties and other people are to be made in a short time so that these happenings will not be repeated. National unity and integrity of our country is an important task for us. The U.S. support behind the secessionist forces of Punjab and the plan for dismemberment of our country is well known. The happenings between 31st October and 3rd November should be understood in that light. The need of the hour is to fight for the unity of our people and to defeat the plan of dismemberment in the interest of our country.

Kerala Fisherwomen in Veraval

Vimal Ranadive

THE readers of the Voice of the Working Woman will remember the horrifying story of Mary Vakkachan, 18 year old girl from Kerala who was employed on a contract basis in Veraval, Gujrat in fishing industry. She died suddenly in the camp in the month of January 1982. The Government had ordered an inquiry. An action Committee was formed in Veraval. It ultimately came out that she was raped and branded, which caused her death. The reason was the refusal to bow before the employer. Immediately after hearing the news, the CITU and the AICCWW issued a strong statement demanding a thorough inquiry in this incident and ensure that the two important Acts on "State Migrant Labour" and "Contract Labour" are implemented.

It is heartening to note a report on "employment of women from Kerala in the Fish Processing Units of Gujarat", prepared by Institute of Social Studies Trusts published for the Ministry of Labour, Government of India in March 1984. The report confirms what we have predicted at that time, about the bad situation of women workers in Fish Processing Industries in Gujarat.

The women workers from Kerala are brought in groups by contractors to Veraval in Gujarat. The present report has given examples of their exploitation and recommended a number of measures for the improvement of their working conditions. It would be useful if we produce some parts of the report for our readers and make justice to the cause of working women.

Why Kerala Girls Preferred

The traditional occupations of the families in rural areas of Kerala are mainly Coir making and fishing. The young girls, more than 4000 aged 21 years and above are working in Veraval in Gujarat. Large number of these girls were found to be unmarried. Because Kerala State is not able to absorb these girls, they have to find jobs outside. The processed fish are exported mostly to foreign countries, 80 per cent of which is exported to Japan.

There are about 14-15 companies at Veraval, processing the fish. Each company employs about 200 women workers, supposed to pay monthly salaries, depending upon their skill and type of work involved. For peeling, the pay is Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- and for grading Rs. 300-325. The reasons for employing Kerala girls as per the study were they were skilled in peeling and grading, and worked very fast.

The Nature of Employment

The peak season for fishing is usually from August to April-May. Kerala women workers, both peelers and graders are, therefore, employed only for nine months in a year. These women are employed by contractors on contract, are paid in advance of Rs. 50 to Rs. 150 to the family of the women workers. The contractors are supposed to pay to and for fares from Kerala and provide food etc. on the way. In the fishing industry, in Veraval it was found that only Kerala girls are employed as graders, as they only have the skill and experience. These girls are also employed in peeling.

The Wages

The management pays the total amount to contractors and he administers the wages. It was reported by these girls that the contractors deduct wages for the days when workers are absent on job due to illness, even though the contractors receive the full months wages of the workers from the company. At the time of the contract they were promised Rs. 275 per month, but the wage reported to have been paid was only Rs. 225 per month. The reason given was the work not being satisfactory. There were also incidents of non payment of salary. The Ravi Ratna company where Mary was employed, workers were not paid wages for 2 months, although the contractor was paid the total wages of the workers by the company.

According to the survey, the minimum wage for peelers in fish processing industry in Kerala works out to be around Rs. 17/- (The

basic wage of Rs. 7.40 + D.A. which is calculated on the basis of the CPI for particular district). But in actual practice they get Rs. 8/- only. It is estimated, the peeler makes about Rs. 160/- p.m. The payment is made on the basis of number of basins peeled. Each basin contains approximately 5 kgs of shrimps. The grader also does packing and gets fixed salary Rs. 300/- to 325/-.

Working Hours

The working hours are usually very long from 8 to 9 a.m. to 12 midnight during season. Otherwise it is till 6 p.m. in the evening. It depends on the catch. If the fish arrives early morning, the girls are woken up and taken to the place. The women reported that there were no fixed hours of work, neither they were paid for working overtime and till late in the night. They would prefer to have fixed working hours.

Labour Legislations

According to the Minimum Wages Act, the women workers are entitled to get Rs. 10/- for semi-skilled work. But as per the report, it was found the Minimum Wage Act was violated in case of peelers.

The Interstate Migrant Workers Act was also found to be violated. The Act States the wages are to be paid by the contractors in the presence of the company. In practice it was found that in most companies the representatives were not present during distribution of wages. Even if they were present they have no control over the contractors in case of payment with the result women get less wages. According to this Act, women are to be paid wages since the day they leave their homes for Veral but wages are paid only after they arrive to the plant. This shows, as to how the Migrant Workers Act is blatantly violated by the management leaving the field open for profit to the contractors.

Accommodation

The women workers are accommodated in small rooms, the number varying from 9 to 15 each room. The quarters are in the vicinity of the factory. The rooms are usually damp and stink. The rooms are so small that these girls

have to manage somehow to sleep in the room.

The food is mostly cooked by girls themselves. It is usually gruel-rice and some vegetable. Tea and Coffee is made occasionally, the mess fee is deducted from the salary which ranges from Rs. 90-125.

Health Hazards

Women are provided with aprons and caps. But the need of wearing gloves is very important. Women are to work in the ice, stand hours together there when the fingers become numb. (The report from Vizak fisheries),

Right to form Trade Unions

The employees have no right to form trade unions and according to the survey report they have no means for redressal of their grievances. The hours of work is extended sometimes upto 12 hours per day. This issue was brought to the notice of the Gujarat Government. The concerned Minister paid a personal visit to these factories and made arrangements for proper payment of wages in the presence of the labour welfare officer. He also suggested construction of hostels for these women, as per the report.

It is reported in the study that many fisheries are on the decline due to "unionisation". The recent trend has been to start industries in other southern states by Kerala business men to avoid the union activities.

The study reports, one Mr. Nair who has visited the place made a petition to Kerala Minister on behalf of 3000 women and men workers, stating the workers were denied benefits entitled under various labour laws and they were subjected to exploitation of various kinds. The workers actually were made bonded labourers and wages were not paid properly by the contractors. Over time is not paid. There is no security of jobs.

With regard to the terrorisation of women workers by contractors, the report has to say so many things on the basis of the information they collected. "Most of the women, remain tight lipped about the episode (Mary's death) whether they were being threatened to do so was difficult to ascertain." The women are

expected to do the work and return home. They are not allowed to mingle freely with women from other companies. In most of the companies letters are censored, incoming and outgoing. The report concluded with the following:

"To conclude, the high rate of unemployment coupled with poverty and big family size force women workers from Kerala to take up jobs outside Kerala. The news papers which have made scope into the working conditions of these women have also alleged sexual harassment by the supervisors and employers. The girls/women were too frightened (or threatened) to admit harassment of any sort during the interviews. To what extent this kind of harassment is going on is yet to be ascertained."

**The Study team, after Discussion, made Suggestions to Improve the Situation in the Industry which are worthwhile
Some of them are given here**

1. Women workers had to be approached and made aware of their rights. Leadership had to be built from among them, perhaps leading to the formation of their own groups or co-operatives.

2. Labour department of Kerala and Gujarat jointly call the meetings of the women workers both to help them to articulate their problems as well as to provide them some training on workers rights.

3. To try and find women's organisations, voluntary agencies who would not only meet the women workers but liaise with them and the employers and would safeguard their interests both in Kerala and Gujarat.

4. The trade unions in Gujarat should take more interest in preventing the violation of labour laws at their end.

5. Hostels to be opened for working women in Veraval.

6. Contract Labour Act should be looked into as it provided rights to contractors which led to their violation of labour legislation.

7. Task force be appointed at the highest level through the Ministry of Labour to raise

the awareness. Gross violation of labour laws in relation to vulnerable young women workers and enough noise is created to act as an impediment to those who are terrorising those girls.

8. The Govt. of Gujarat be forced to implement the Minimum Wages Act.

9. Inter State Migration Act be modified.

10. To send a high power team to investigate and report on the conditions of the women workers so that it may act as a deterrent to the contractors' practices.

A small follow up committee has been formed which was located in the Institute of Management in Government, Trivandrum. It was reported that Mrs. Padme Ramchandran, the Director has agreed to follow-up and pursue the actions and decisions taken at the workshop.

Government must Act

Considering the vested interest the fishing companies have in the whole affair and the sole authority given to the selfish and greedy contractors to exploit women bypassing the contract labour Act and Inter-State Migrant workers Act, etc., unless the Trade Unions, Women's Organisations, etc. take up the fight seriously and demand justice for women workers before it was too late, nothing could move. The Union Labour Ministry must intervene and compel the Gujarat and Kerala Governments to take up the question of the application of the Minimum Wages Act and the Inter-State Migrant workers Act, Contract Labour Act.

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On being informed by the Home Minister that the school building were inadequate to cope with the sudden demand, the delegation demanded that the ASIAD STADIA lying unutilised be immediately requisitioned to set up camps in a satisfactory manner. They also demanded that the Red Cross be galvanised to perform its functions in providing blankets, tents, milk, medicines and clothes especially to the vulnerable sections in these camps namely the aged, the women and children.

Redeeming a pledge

The Left Front Government was returned to power in West Bengal for the second term with a massive mandate of the people in 1982. The achievements of the 36-point programme of the first Left Front Government encouraged us to adopt a time-bound 34-point programme for the welfare of peasants, workers, the middleclass, the exploited and the deprived sections and the backward classes people. There has been an unmistakable continuity in the activities of the first and

production at reasonable prices, formation of State Jute Corporation, raising of area under irrigation, formulation of realistic schemes for improved production of fish, poultry, milk and dairy products, review of the Panchayati Raj laws, coordination of the developmental work of the municipalities, liberating co-operatives from the control of vested interests, construction of regulated market for agricultural produce, ensuring free education upto Higher Secondary level, democratisation

The path we have to travel is difficult and tortuous. But with the correct policies we are pursuing and by continuously keeping in touch with the people and serving their interests, our success is assured.

Government of West Bengal

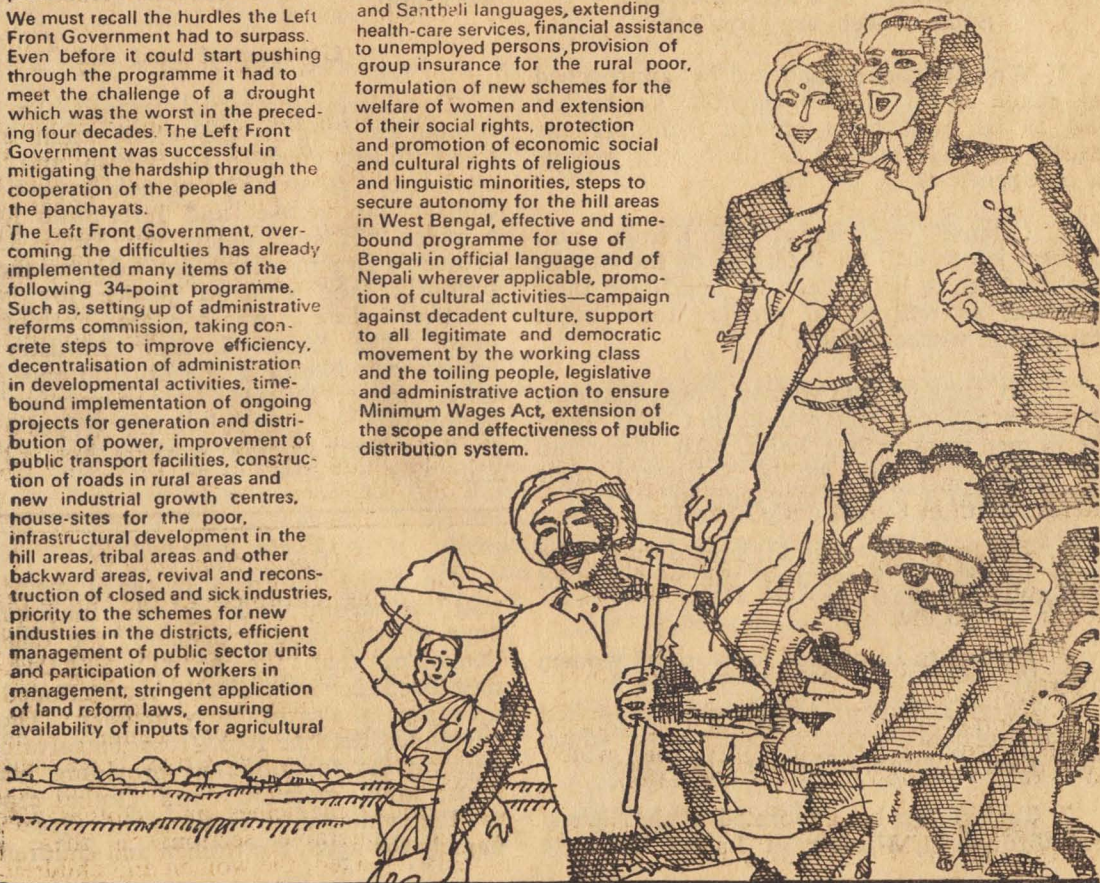
The 34-Point Programme

second Left Front Governments. It is worthwhile to mention here that no fundamental changes are possible within the ambit of the present socio-economic milieu.

We must recall the hurdles the Left Front Government had to surpass. Even before it could start pushing through the programme it had to meet the challenge of a drought which was the worst in the preceding four decades. The Left Front Government was successful in mitigating the hardship through the cooperation of the people and the panchayats.

The Left Front Government, overcoming the difficulties has already implemented many items of the following 34-point programme. Such as, setting up of administrative reforms commission, taking concrete steps to improve efficiency, decentralisation of administration in developmental activities, time-bound implementation of ongoing projects for generation and distribution of power, improvement of public transport facilities, construction of roads in rural areas and new industrial growth centres, house-sites for the poor, infrastructural development in the hill areas, tribal areas and other backward areas, revival and reconstruction of closed and sick industries, priority to the schemes for new industries in the districts, efficient management of public sector units and participation of workers in management, stringent application of land reform laws, ensuring availability of inputs for agricultural

of higher educational institutions and maintaining proper academic atmosphere, imparting education through the mother tongue encouragement to Urdu, Nepali, and Santhali languages, extending health-care services, financial assistance to unemployed persons, provision of group insurance for the rural poor, formulation of new schemes for the welfare of women and extension of their social rights, protection and promotion of economic social and cultural rights of religious and linguistic minorities, steps to secure autonomy for the hill areas in West Bengal, effective and time-bound programme for use of Bengali in official language and of Nepali wherever applicable, promotion of cultural activities—campaign against decadent culture, support to all legitimate and democratic movement by the working class and the toiling people, legislative and administrative action to ensure Minimum Wages Act, extension of the scope and effectiveness of public distribution system.



Arrest the Rising Trend of Female Illiteracy

ACCORDING to the Census of 1981, above 75 per cent or 241.6 million women are illiterate. This trend in the rise of illiteracy is particularly sharp since 1951 when planned development started. The figures given below indicate this.

1951	—	161.9 million
1961	—	185.2 million
1971	—	215.3 million
1981	—	241.6 million

The Vth Plan while suggesting an increase in the enrolment for girls, continues to maintain the gap between the two sexes by suggesting 81.5 per cent as the target for girls. This, if achieved, would only mean that one out of 5 girls in the 6-11 year age group, will be out of school.

The middle school presents a more alarming situation. In the Vth Plan, the enrolment of boys in the age group 11-14 years was 52 per cent whereas of girls the percentage was 27.7. What was more disturbing was the target fixed for this group in the Vth Plan. The target for the girls is slightly over half than that of the boys i.e. boys — 61.1 per cent and girls — 36.8 per cent.

“Women’s Welfare not Satisfactory in Women’s Decade”

A two day Conference of State ministers and secretaries was held in Delhi on 27-28 September, 1984 to discuss the social welfare measures under Seventh Plan. As per the report appeared in the press, the different agencies have suggested the outlay should be at least 1 per cent of the total public sector. 1 per cent increase would mean an allocation of Rs. 1800 crores for the social welfare sector, in the Seventh Plan. Of this, Rs. 1200 crores would go to the Central Sector and Rs. 600 crores in the state sector. It was reported that Rs. 660 crores or 58 per cent of the central sector plan outlay is expected to go to child welfare in the age group of 3-6 years. This would facilitate opening of 2,000 more nutrition centres, making it a total of 3000 by the end of the plan, covering 60 per cent of the country.

For the women’s welfare programme Rs. 240 crores of 20 per cent of the Central

Sector outlay is proposed to be spent.

The social welfare ministry is going to suggest in the Nairobi Women’s Conference that the Women’s Decade should be extended. The reason is the progress made during the decade is not satisfactory!

Highlights of the Andhra Mahila Conference

The Andhra Mahila Conference was attended by 500 delegates from 20 districts of Andhra Pradesh. They represented working women, including agriculture and peasant, middle class housewives, lawyers, teachers, students and doctors.

Majority of the delegates were young between the ages of 16 to 30. About 25,000 women have participated in the rally coming on foot, by lorries, tractors, buses and trains. Public meeting was attended by 60,000 men and women.

For the success of the conference, Com. Udayam, Swarajam and others campaigned in the area for a month and held several meetings. 20,000 leaflets, 10,000 pamphlets about the conference were distributed. 2000 wall posters were pasted with slogans like “Zindabad Telangana Heroines” “Welcome to the Conference”.

A giant gate with a length of 30 feet and width 50 feet with the portrait of Ailamma in the centre naming “the Gate of Heroine mother of Telengana” was erected in the town. For the success of the conference, youth and agricultural workers’ organisations, Kisan Sabha volunteers worked day in and day out. Com. Udayam in her tour collected Rs. 50,000 for the conference.

On the inaugural day a volunteers march organised with red saries saluted the martyrs column, 30 young delegates from 19 districts spoke on the report which was adopted unanimously. (From the report by A.M. Sangham)

Maid Servants : Most Neglected

THE maid servants employed in household labour are playing a significant role especially in small towns of India. A case study in Rohtak shows that they work for physical and psychological maintenance in the domestic sphere and hence their necessity is realised more and more in household where both male and female members are employed.

Given the fragmented, unskilled and low-paid nature of the job, it is but obvious that the maid servants come invariably from poor economic groups. Interestingly, however, they do not always hail from the lower castes. This is because many of the high caste employers do not allow women from scheduled castes to work in their houses for jobs such as cleaning of utensils, washing of clothes, cooking, feeding of children, etc. About 50 per cent of the respondents belonged to displaced punjabi families who came to settle in Rohtak in the aftermath of partition of India in 1947. Six of the respondents were Brahmin who took to such low status job because of extreme poverty but worked in high caste families and performed clean jobs. It shows that caste is an important factor for getting employed in household jobs.

The maid servants belonged to the age group of 15-75 but their numbers declined positively with increase in age, and 52 per cent of the respondents came from 15-35 age group. This is so because the employers normally do not employ very old and young ones as their capacity for labour is limited and they cannot perform their duties in proper way. The younger ones worked mostly part-time while the older ones worked full time and stayed with their employers.

Among the respondents 30 per cent were unmarried, 34 per cent married, 24 per cent widow and 12 per cent divorced. It was gathered that unmarried girls worked to support their family's income and also to arrange money for their marriage. However, their very job and the employment of their family members as maid servants affected their chances of marriage since women in this job are considered to be of low moral. The divorced and

the widows were compelled to work to eke out a living and the married ones worked because of low income of their husbands.

Seventysix per cent of the respondents lived in unclear families. Since their husbands also work outside their home as peddlars, rickshaw pullers, etc., their children are invariably neglected. 70 per cent of the maid servants were completely illiterate. The employers were mainly University lecturers (32 per cent), doctors (26 per cent), nurses (14 per cent), clerks (10 per cent), business men (6 per cent) and in 64 per cent cases both the husband and wife were in service.

The maid servants did a whole lot of sundry jobs: 48 of them cleaned utensils, 35 washed clothes, 31 swept and cleaned the houses, 29 cooked food and served it, and 13 of them looked after the house and children. They did these works alone or in combination with other works. Besides some of them also fetched milk, escorted the children to school and looked after the kitchen gardens.

Twentyfour per cent of the maid servants lived in the house of the employer where both the husband and wife were working and all of them were full time workers. 46 per cent of the respondents who were working part-time worked in 2 to 6 hours per day. The full time workers, those who did not stay with the employers, worked for 7 to 15 hours a day while the part-time workers worked for 2½ hrs to 8 hrs. The full-time workers, who stayed with their employers, served at call.

The income of the maid servants varied according to the nature of the jobs, family size and status of the employer and duration of work. The wage is settled both on piece rate basis and on monthly contract. Two thirds of our respondents earned between Rs. 90 to Rs. 150 per month by working in one or more than one house. Those who stayed with the employer and did all sorts of work earned Rs 150 to Rs 250 per month along with food. The average wage per hour of work came barely to Rs. one for part time workers. The total family income of the respondents also did not exceed Rs 500 in 60 per cent of the cases out of which 40 per cent earned less than Rs 300 per month. In view of such little income

they could not save more than Rs 30 per month in average.

The maid servants who stay with their employers also eat there but the quality and quantity of the food is not always what their employers eat. They are seldom given the delicious items; sometimes they also eat the leftovers and usually eat after everybody in the family has taken the food. 44 per cent of the respondents get extra things such as old clothes, shoes and some eatables besides their wage. But none of them gets any compensation if she suffers from any injury while working. Those who work in doctors' houses get only medicines. 54 per cent of the respondents are paid certain extra remuneration on festivals and special occasions in the employers' family but they do work overtime on those days. Girls get some gifts when they get married and married women also get gifts while their daughters are married off.

44 per cent of the respondents are unhappy about their present job but they are sticking to it because of lack of alternatives. However, 60 per cent of them would quit the job if they can afford it, and none of the respondents would like her children to take up this occupation. All of them feel that because of their low earnings and absence from home their children are uneducated and uncared for. Such absence also results in lack of harmony with their spouses. The maid servants are so poor that

most of them continue to work even during advanced state of pregnancy and 60 per cent of the married ones started working 15 to 20 days after delivering the baby. Many of them also complained of body-ache, cracked foot, headache and indigestion.

Half of the respondents have been working with the same employer for more than 5 years and about one-third of them for 10 to 20 years. Since most of them are dissatisfied with this job, it is but obvious that they are attached to their employers out of compulsion rather than own volition. 10 per cent of the respondents were treated very badly by their employers but most of the employers rarely reprimand the servants for minor mistakes or minor damage. The servants are not made to pay for any damage caused by them while working.

A study of 50 maid servants in Rohtak city emphasises that they are leading a miserable life. Torn between familial responsibilities and the work situation they are a pathetic lot. They suffer from low wage, long hours of work, shifting nature of job, lack of freedom and low prestige due to inferior status of the job. Due to lack of coordination their children are neglected and the familial relation becomes tense. The fragmented nature of their job, lack of education and low bargaining capacity vis-a-vis the floating labour market refrain them from organising collectively.

From Mainstream Sept. 1, 1984

(Contd. from page 2)

in Uzbekistan threw off the traditional veil, learnt to read and write and are now participating in the state affairs.

All these achievements, progress made by Soviet Women will be hampered if the Soviet Union is attacked by Imperialism, USA. If the Nuclear war breaks out, the whole mankind will be faced with serious situation. The Soviet Women's Committee has rightly sent messages to women in the world to prevent Nuclear War by joint-efforts, they are sure the war can be avoided. While making efforts for peaceful negotiations even after Reagan's victory in the last elections, the USSR is keeping its defences in tact, making it clear to the aggressors that they would meet with powerful retaliation if attacked, while stating that they will not be the first to attack. They have called for nuclear free zones to start with. Soviet

Union has asked to withdraw the battle field nuclear weapons from central Europe and other places. But the U.S. and the European allies are not willing to withdraw the Pershing and Cruise missiles stationed in Europe.

Under such serious circumstances Soviet People and people in the rest of the countries are launching great struggles for peace, mobilising in thousands and lakhs raising slogans "No Nuclear War" and "For World Peace". Women in U.S., Germany, France and Australia too are, in the forefront of this struggle. The women in our country should mobilise to defend our country against the conspiracies of USA who are arming Pakistan with weapons. We should know that U.S. war plans are not only directed against Soviet Union, but it is a plan to enslave the whole world. On this day we assure our sisters in Soviet Union to do everything possible to avert War. We stand for peace.

WEST BENGAL

The forward march continues

Looking back at the seven-year span of the Left Front Government in West Bengal, what is the picture that emerges? It is a picture of a State which has remained free from communal, caste, linguistic and other divisive conflicts which weaken the nation; a State where the law and order situation is better than that in many other states; a State where the people's democratic rights are secure; a State where specially the under-privileged and the toiling people have the assurance that the Government is their friend and ally; a State where there are no internal dissensions in the Ministry which can threaten the stability of the Government.

The Left Front Government has been implementing its minimum programme with all sincerity despite the constraints of the present socio-economic structure and the Central Government's obstructive and discriminatory policies. The Government has been laying stress on Land Reforms Programme and on activities relating to the welfare of the people, particularly of the deprived sections of the society. Emphasis is also placed on upholding the dignity of the common people in the towns and villages. In the Rural Development Programme, participation of the rural poor who constitute the vast majority of the population

In the countryside has been specially ensured and their rights have been assured. The Panchayat system which was non-existent in the State now symbolises the new life.

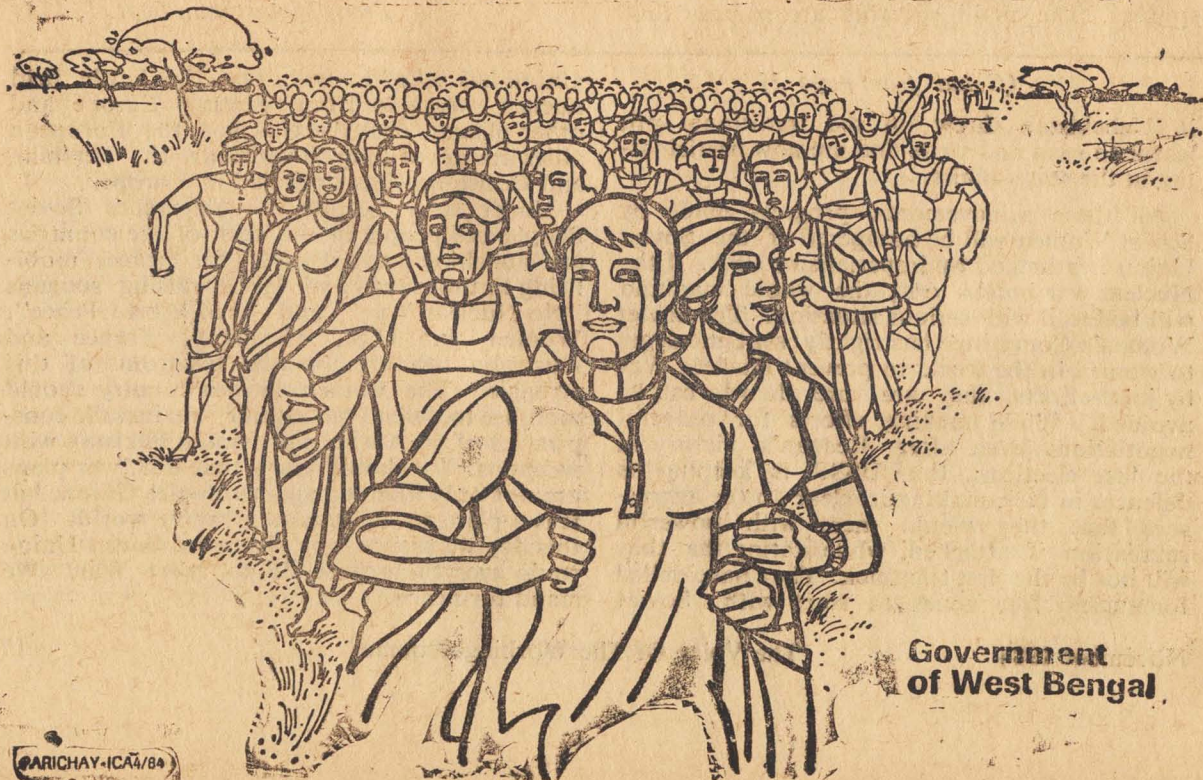
A number of far reaching measures have been initiated in a short period to spread education throughout the State. Chaos and disruption in the academic sphere are things of the past.

The suppressed rights of the industrial workers have been restored and collective bargaining has been encouraged. The workers are being motivated to fully honour agreements arrived at and render their help in the matter of industrial advance. The Left Front Government has made significant strides in the sphere of cottage and small-scale industries, handloom and khadi. It has been continuing its fight against the unjust policies of the Government of India on issues like new investments and the setting up of modern industries in this State. The Union Government's latest decision to withhold the implementation of the 8th Finance Commission recommendations for the current year is a step to deprive the state of its right

dues. The people of the State can well gauge the intention of the centre and they raise their protest in unequivocal terms.

The review of centre-state relations which was mooted by the Left Front Government is today a paramount subject of national discussion.

There have been many hurdles in the way of progress. Devastating floods and drought have played havoc with the economy. There is opposition and there will be opposition from many quarters, particularly from reactionary forces opposed to the interest of the people. The Government at the Centre, too, is encouraging such forces to create problems for the State. If the new development process in West Bengal is to succeed, it has to succeed in spite of the opposition — by overcoming it. The Left Front Government stands committed to raise further the consciousness of the people and enlist their active support by serving their interests continuously and improving the performance in various sectors for the benefit of all sections of the society. The people of West Bengal will continue to march forward.



Government
of West Bengal

Conference of Andhra Pradesh AIDWA

“WELCOME the Telengana heroines”, “Long live the heroic fight for land” amidst slogan shouting, the conference of Andhra Mahila Sangham (AIDWA) began on October 13 at Miryalguda, Warangal District, one of the places where peasants, men and women launched bitter guerilla struggles for land, during 1946-51. Ninety year old Ailamma, the guerrilla fighter of the time was honoured by being presented with a red flag at the flag hoisting ceremony which was performed by Mythily Shivaraman.

Ahilya Rangnagar, the Joint Secretary of AIDWA inaugurated the Conference. More than 500 delegates and observers participated in the conference. Ahilya Rangnagar in her speech welcomed the great contribution made by the people of Andhra Pradesh in defence of democracy by reinstating the N.T. Rama Rao ministry. She said that the Congress(I) had converted the MLAs into commodities and along with the prices of all commodities the prices of MLAs were also rising. It was reported that even Rs. 25 lakhs were offered per MLA for defection.

This could not be done in West Bengal and Tripura where the left Front Governments were in power. While turning to the serious situation in the country created by the divisive forces in Punjab, Assam, Tripura and other places, she pointed to the imperialist conspiracies behind them to dismember the country. Assailing the Govt. for its utter failure to maintain the unity of the country, she urged upon the members to accept the task and fight the divisive forces unitedly. She further called upon them to see the war danger from the same imperialists headed by USA to wipe out the achievements of socialism and dominate the world and urged for stepping up the struggle for peace and safeguard of socialism.

After the inauguration of the conference, M. Udayam, the General Secretary of Andhra Mahila Sangham placed the report for discussion.

The next day session began with honouring the Telangana heroines, viz, Ailamma, Satyavathi, Sashikala Ramalamma, Janaki Amma and Swarajam. Swarajam introduced

each by narrating how they fought for the land, against repression while standing firm. All the heroines were presented with red-saries as a token of their heroism.

Vimal Ranadive, the Vice-President of AIDWA and the Secretary of AICCWW congratulated the delegates on behalf of the organisations. She explained the great struggle of Telengana where the women along with the other people fought a bitter struggle facing unprecedented repression by Razakars and by the Indian Army. She mentioned about the increasing unemployment among women which reached about 36 lakhs in 1983 from 32 lakhs in 1982 despite tall promises made by the govt to give employment to the women. The mechanisation in Tobacco in Andhra resulted in unemployment of women in thousands and the Central Govt. has taken further move for modernisation and mechanisation in match, garment, agriculture and so on where a majority of women are employed. She pointed out that women's vote is a decisive vote on which Ruling Party banks upon. So the women have to play great role in defeating the Congress in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

More than 12 delegates from each district participated in the discussion highlighting the contribution of the districts in struggle. The report was adopted unanimously with amendments suggested by the delegates. In between, the resolutions on war danger, price rise, etc. were moved and passed. A resolution greeting the people of Andhra Pradesh for defeating the Centre's conspiracies to continue Benami Bhaskar Rao Govt. and reinstating the N.T. Rama Rao ministry was moved by Swarajam.

A mammoth rally was held on 15th which was participated by thousands of women who came from various places. Women agricultural workers, tribals and Harijans were present in large numbers. The packed gathering of women in Miryalguda reminded everyone of the spirit of Telengana. People from villages arrived with bands, and other traditional things, playing and singing in the street. The rally was presided over by Swarajam and addressed by M. Udayam, Ahilya Rangnagar, Vimal Ranadive, Mythily Shivaraman, Hanumantha Rao, N. Prasad Rao, B.N. Reddy, etc.

Ailamma, The Telengana Heroine

Vimal Ranadive

CHAKALI AILAMMA, the heroine of the Telengana struggle was the centre of attraction in the women's conference of Andhra Mahila Sangham. She was sitting in a red saree on the chair, 90 years old, wrinkleless all over her face, but very, very bright eyes she had. Ailamma was the pride of all the women and men assembled for the flag salutation in the morning. Udayam had brought her from her village Palakurti with great efforts. She was presented with a red flag which she held since the Telengana struggle started in 1946. She fought against the Razakars and soldiers of Indian army for retaining her land and against repression. It was a moving sight no doubt when she held the flag amidst slogans shouting all around her.

Ahilya, Mythily and myself decided to meet her separately to get an interview on those incidents 40 years back if possible. We had to struggle hard no doubt. Firstly, the language question was there and secondly she wanted to say so many things at one time which was difficult for us to concentrate. Once Com. Swarajam the colleague in her struggle asked her to wait for translation, she snubbed her saying, "do not interrupt" and continued her story!

Ailamma comes from a "Dholi Community". The struggle for land started in 1946 beginning. A public meeting was held in the village to denounce the system of bonded labour called "Vetti Chakiri". Ailamma said, "a bullock cart drawn by 16 pairs of bullocks went to bring the leaders of Andhra Mahasabha for the meeting". She still remembers the name of the landlord, Vishnoora Rama Chandra Reddy against whom the attack was made in the public meeting.

Vishnoora Rama Chandra Reddy's goondas came to the meeting in disguise and wanted to attack the leaders and break the meeting. But Ailamma said, "the villagers traced the goondas and attacked them". During the attack a hand of a goonda was fractured. But the meeting was a success. Next day the police came and arrested Ailamma's husband and two sons. Others also got arrested under the Section 307—attempt to murder. This struggle was co-related with the land problem. Ailamma said, "we were cultivating one landlord's land

as tenant for the last 15 years. This Vishnoora Ramachandra Reddy acquired power of attorney from the small land lord and tried to evict Ailamma forcibly from the tenancy land. "We resisted with the help of Sangham. My castor field was destroyed. After my husband and son's arrest I went to Hyderabad and met Deshmukh Vishnoora Ramachandra Reddy and requested him not to destroy my rice field. The land lord wrote a chit to Miskin Ali, his agent. The agent took Rs. 600 'bribe' from me under some excuse and promised that he would not do anything wrong. But the "Rakshas" (demons) gathered his goondas to harvest the rice field". Ailamma then sent for Sangham leaders. Com: B.N. Reddy, Yadgiri Rao and others came and collected the volunteers to resist the goondas and saved the crop. Ailamma courageously stood in the field all the time. The grain was harvested and taken to her house. Meanwhile the landlord sent for police, they came to the place at 7 PM. But the volunteers had already retreated. The leaders stayed in Ailamma's home. Chilly powder was used to arrest the leaders. Ailamma abused the landlord as "Rakshas", and said "he never allowed women labourers to go to feed their babies while working".

Swarajam asked her "why did the landlords torture you Ailamma? "They wanted my land! It was mine, I was labouring— why should I give him? So I started fighting them with the help of the volunteers, they started hounding me out because of that—". Ailamma had 5 sons and one daughter. Her daughter-in-law was with her when we interviewed. Ailamma was in tears when she said "my daughter, Sona was tortured so that she would reveal her parents' whereabouts. She was saved by one of the farmers. She lost both her sons during that period."

Even after her sons and husbands arrest Ailamma insisted that the party leaders should organise the peasants. It was the great courage when she stood like a rock in the field during the attack by the goondas of Vishnoora Deshmukh. She inspired the whole family to be with the party and Andhra Mahasabha. Her house became later a centre for the activists to continue the fight against landlords.

Round Table Conference in Moscow on Peace

A round table Conference on the subject of "Women's participation in the struggle for Peace" was held in Moscow from 24th to 25th July. Madhuri Dasgupta, an executive member of AIDWA attended the conference along with the representatives of AIWC, NFIW, National Association of Rural Women and also Coogress(I) Mahila Front. The first Vice-President of Soviet Women's committee Ksenia Proskurnikova and other prominent women leaders were present. The conference began on 24th July. Madhuri Dasgupta submitted the paper on the activities of AIDWA in the struggle for Peace with special reference of the movement on Peace in West Bengal and the role women played. Women members of the Soviet Women's committee narrated their activities on Peace and their experiences in the battle of Leningrad during the second world war, the conditions on the concentration camps in Fascist Germany. Soviet Union has taken a number of steps to stop the arms race, declaring openly that they would not be the first people to use the Nuclear Weapons. President Reagan on the contrary continuing to deploy Pershing 2 and Cruise missiles in the Western Europe, has confronted the world with real danger of nuclear war.

The following excerpts from Madhuri Dasgupta's speech at the conference is given here:

...We struggle for equal rights and elimination of all forms of exploitation against women. As social beings we are increasingly becoming aware that there is no way of solving our problems unless disarmament and Peace is ensured. Because in a climate of war psychosis, attacks on democratic rights, revival of most reactionary forces, and the emergence of neo fascist and military groups in some countries women are frequently the victims of despotism and violence. The United Nations Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children is being grossly violated in a number of countries, by diverting large share of world resources on arms and military build-ups instead of being spent on removing poverty, hunger, ignorance, disease and squalor. For this reason the World Congress of Women, Prague, 1981 said NO-TO WAR, it noted that "Peace is the most important prerequisite for the attainment of our objectives".

Our experience of the two World Wars of 1914-1918 & 1939-45 shows that a war in the present day situation can no longer be an isolated occurring. On the contrary it shall unavoidably assume a worldwide character, engulfing the entire humanity in its flames. The two world wars of our country resulted in unprecedented number of casualties, loss of human life and destruction of property. The first World War took a toll of 10 million lives and the Second World War, 55 millions. During the second World War, USA dropped Atom Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. As a result of this barbarous onslaught more than 270,000 people died, and even after 39 years of that holocaust the Atom Bomb survivors are dying horrible and agonising deaths at a very high rate. There were over 10,000 uptill August 1981. At least 3,75,000 survivors suffered irreparable damage. In some of the recent localised Wars in different parts of the world, millions of people have been killed and tortured as a result of the use of more sophisticated mass destructions weapons.

To-day the American imperialists are planning for another global war — they are planning for a nuclear war. The Reagan Administration in collaboration with its Nato allies, has installed Pershing-II and Cruise missiles in West Germany, Italy and Great Britain. These missiles can reach targets in the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries of Europe in a few minute's time.

To-day, due to the activities of American imperialists who are making intensive nuclear war preparation against Soviet Union and other Socialist countries of Europe, the world face the grim threat of a nuclear war, endangering the very existence of humanity — a war which, wherever it starts, will soon engulf the whole globe, including our own country. If such a war starts, a handful of reckless men will plunge the world into the biggest catastrophe since the origin of this earth. We in India have only been hearing about there things now. But the situation has changed of late. The arming of Pakistan, U.S. bases in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and in Triconmalee and Chittagong, the constant patrolling of the Oceans by nuclear-weapons carrying fleets of the U.S.—all those have brought the threat of

war to our land also. This is a part of the global strategy of imperialism to enslave each and every country, including India.

Now time has come to tell the Statesmen of the imperialist countries that it is not they who are going to decide the fate of humanity. The greatest power is that of the people. If millions of people say "No to War" then no ruling class will dare wage a war. The last word is that of the people and not that of the aggressors. The slogan "No to War" given by the World Congress of Women, Prague, 1981 has to-day become the people's slogan throughout the world.

We, the women of India, are greatly inspired by the activities of women of European Countries in organising "No to War" movement. We are aware of the danger of nuclear war. We realise that we are living in a qualitatively new dangerous situation, the world being pushed to the brink of a nuclear war. We never forget that the development of women cannot be conceived in the situation of war and war-preparations. We cherish the idea of building a happy

and prosperous life for our children and for this we want peaceful conditions, we want that peace should prevail and peace should be preserved. In the present situation, to materialise this idea we have to build a big peace movement in our country.

We are happy to declare that in our land peace movement is gaining ground. Mass rallies and demonstrations, meeting and conventions are taking place in various forms in different States to highlight the danger emanating from the aggressive designs of the imperialists headed by Reagan Administration. In this movement women are taking an active part.

It is true that in organizing Peace Movement we, the women of India, still lag behind in comparison to the women of European countries and America. But I on behalf of our organisation, the All India Democratic Women's Association, assure our fellow-fighters for peace in those distant lands that although our peace movement is much weaker we will soon make up the lag.

Magnificent Benefits for Mother and Child in G.D.R.

IN the GDR the basic rights, of women, such as equal wage for equal work, the same vocational and educational chances as men, were guaranteed in the constitution for the first time in German history. The GDR Government, the working class party and the FDGB initiated and put into force by law or statutory provisions many social-policy measures to make possible for women the observance of their rights and to help them reconcile their vocational development with their duties as mothers. The following provisions were of special importance. On September 7th 1950, the Govt. adopted the Law for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Rights of Women. The law provided for the payment of a monthly family allowance for the fourth and each following child, granting of a paid pregnancy and maternity leave of 11 weeks for working women under observance of all her rights in her enterprise. In May 28th, 1958 the Regulation of a monthly family allowance for each child and increase of the grant paid on the birth of a child, payment starting with the first child, became the

law. On April 8th of 1960 the Government passed directive of the Council of Ministers for financial assistance for single working mothers in case of sickness of their children. On Sept. 22nd of 1962, a decision of the Council of Ministers was taken in support for working mothers in getting a place for their children in creches and kindergartens. In 1963 a regulation on prolongation of the paid pregnancy and maternity leave from 11 to 14 weeks, was passed. In 1965 and 1967 the Family Law was adopted by the People's Chamber. Men and women were made fully equal also with regard to family law, as well regulations were passed on a five-day working week (as compared to five and a half days before) and on the improvement of living conditions for families with four and more children. They get bigger flats, state allowances for rents and other grants. A regulation on the improvement of Social Insurance benefits for working people with two and more children also came into existence.

Directive on granting favourable conditions to families with many children when they

build, buy or maintain houses of their own, was passed in 1970. A law was adopted on Legal Abortion Free of Charge in 1972 while increase of minimum holidays for all mothers working full-time to 18 days, prolongation of paid pregnancy and maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks, paid leave to nurse a sick child for single mothers, and grant paid on the birth of a child was increased to 1,000 marks for all children, beginning with the first (this sum is on average a monthly wage). New complex social-policy measures were passed such as prolongation of the paid pregnancy maternity leave from 18 to 26 weeks, for working mothers, while to their second or third child, paid leave up to one year and the 40 hour working week was introduced for mothers with two and more children. From 1977 to 1984

a new Labour Code was adopted which regulated the rights of working women and mothers. It lays down among other things:

1. Special protection of working women in the interest of motherhood, especially in pregnancy and maternity leave, breaks for breast-feeding a child and special protection from dismissal.

2. Prolongation of the "baby year" for working mothers up to the age of 18 months of the baby in case it is the third or each following child, and

3. Young married couples are remitted repayment of the full amount of an interest-free loan of 5,000 Marks when the third child is born.

NEWS FROM CHINA

A School for Women Cadres

A school for women cadres has been established by the All-China Women's Federation in 1949. Over the years it has trained thousands of women cadres who played an important part in upholding the rights and interests of women at all levels and in organizing them to contribute to the country's economic construction.

This school is open to middle-level leading cadres recommended by provincial, municipal, or autonomous regional women's federations. They must have worked for many years among women at the grassroots levels. All these students have rich work experience, but they feel the need for professional training and a basic knowledge of science and culture which will help them cope with difficult situations. Many wish to come and study at the women's cadre school to become more knowledgeable and competent. The school runs four to five-month training courses twice a year. Cadres study the basic theories of Marxism, and Leninism, the theories of the Chinese women's liberation movement and professional work related to the rights and interests of women.

Besides from lectures by the faculty and leading members of the All-China Women's Federation, noted personages, professors, associate professors, and lecturers from key universities are invited to speak at the school.

The students are encouraged to take part in discussions and integrate theory with experiences they have accumulated while working among women. They visit exhibitions and pilot projects to gain a deeper understanding of the theories and find this form of study lively and informative.

Since 1979, the All-China Women's Federation has carried out many and varied activities to uphold the rights and interests of women and children. In the past, due to their poor understanding of legal provisions, many women cadres felt guilty because they could do little to help the local women. Now they begin to see that they can take the law as their weapon in fighting for the interests and rights of women and children. The class for childcare workers from different parts of the country also yielded good results. It helped promote children's work in women's federation branches. The curricula included child physiology, psychology, schooling, and family education. The students visited advanced kindergartens and nurseries in Beijing, and attended lectures by outstanding teachers.

In order to better train women cadres and fully develop their initiative, the All-China Women's Federation has decided to open on September 1, an institute for women administrators, which provides junior college education.

Village Elderly Finds a House

In our country, the condition of aged, childless people is most pathetic. They feel they are no more wanted by the society, sometimes by their own families even. The following concrete example from China will show us as to how they are trying to solve this particular problem.

In Huancheuy Township of north eastern province of Jilin, a Home for the infirm, disabled or childless aged has been built. The actual cost of the same is 100,000 yuan out of which the amount of 20,000 were allocated by the provincial government and the rest collected by the locality. There is a floor space of 573 meters alongwith bright living rooms, a dining

hall, bathrooms, a medical clinic and recreation room. There are 60 residents aged 60 to 80 including three elderly couples who are infirm, disabled or childless.

All expenses are covered by the Home. An attentive service staff looks after all the individual needs of these elderly residents. There they enjoy a quiet conversation and birth day party for the residents etc. Some of them prefer to pass their time watching T.V. and listening to local operas or playing chess while some more energetic residents prefer not to idle and volunteer for such light tasks as sweeping floors and raising pigs. This is only one of many such institutions in Jilin, where almost every township now has a home for the aged.

Hundreds of Women Detained Under Military Rule in Pakistan

AFTER the imposition of Army rule in Pakistan, hundreds of women have been detained with the intention of creating pressure to make their husbands and relatives surrender. Further, some women were detained without any trial and they are faced with continuous interrogations.

This news was published in the "October issue" of "International New Jilater" of "Amnesty International. The organisation of human rights has got the information of such repressions on the women in Pakistan in the "Lahore Killa". This "Killa" is being used as the centre of interrogation. The Amnesty International stated that since 1982 at least one dozen of women have been detained from one week to the extent of one year.

In these Jails, there are no beds, no suitable bath rooms. Since one side is opened there is no privacy also. Two of such women, who were detained in "Lahore Killa" in the year, 1983 were describing their experiences of horror.

The first woman told that she has been picked up from her house, when the call of agitation for the restoration of democracy and violation of army rule was given. She was an active political worker. She was taken to the superintendent of police who interrogated her

for the first night. On the next day at noon, she was taken back to the Jail, where she was interrogated for a month. At the time of her arrest in the summer season, the dress which she wore, was not added with any additional dresses during winter season. She was not permitted to get to see her ailing father. She was only permitted to Join in the burial ceremony after the completion of which she was again taken to the jail. Then she was transferred to other Jail, from where after two months she was released.

The second woman was arrested on 7th August from Lahore, and she was kept along with other women in the jail. During interrogation she made known to them that she was not attached with active politics; still she was shown a name list and wanted to know about their activities. First 15 days she was interrogated by male police. She was not allowed to sleep for two nights. She was threatened. Her relatives have been brought and she was tortured in front of them in the same way. She suffered then with high blood pressure. Due to assault she became unconscious many a times. Then, she was transferred to "Lajpath Jail" from where she was released after three months.

Formally no charges were brought against them; still they have to give attendance once in two weeks in the Army Court.

Pak Women Barred from Attending Indian Urs

It is reported that the Council of Islamic Theology has stated that it was inappropriate for women, from the Sharias point of view, to attend the urs of various saints in India. The Council has said that participation "may lead to practices having no sanction in "Islam". So no woman in Pakistan now will be included in the official delegation of Pakistan!

Iraq Assembly Elects 33 Women

33 out of 46 women candidates won the Assembly seats of Iraq Assembly, showing significant gains for women in the traditionally male-dominated Arab nation. The total number of seats are 250. There are 20 women parliamentarians in the current house.

Australian Women Resist Cruise Missiles on their Soil

IN November women calling for the removal of all U.S. bases from Australia and for support of the people across Europe struggling against the siting of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, converged on Pine Gap, a vital US military installation, situated in the centre of Australia, over 2,000 kilometres from major capital cities.

Pine Gap was chosen as the focus for this action as it is a critical link in the US global nuclear network. The base, controlled by the CIA, helps give the USA "a first strike capability" and would enable US authorities to monitor whether Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles are accurately hitting their targets in the Soviet Union.

Over 800 women participated in the two-week-long women's peace camp, organized by Women for Survival, a broad coalition of women's anti-war groups. Women of widely varied lifestyles worked together developing many innovative ways to publicise their urgent demand for nuclear disarmament.

One hundred thirty women were arrested at Pine Gap. Their actions included symbolically handing back to US authorities a Cruise missile; staging of a women's Boston tea party within the Pine Gap base to protest against US occupation of a sector of Australian soil; holding the CIA Olympics with events such as the arms race tug-of-war; removal of the main gates to the base and selling pieces of the gate as souvenirs to help fund future peace actions.

The uniqueness of this women's peace action is all the more remarkable considering the desert conditions of heat, dust and flies the women had to endure. Meetings commenced at 7 a.m. to avoid the scorching temperatures

that often soared to above 40°C. The adverse living conditions were assisted by continual harassment of the women by police who buzzed them in helicopters, drove their patrol cars through the camp and regularly filmed and photographed them.

Although this peace protest involved only women in the action and decision making, many men indicated that they wished to show their support. This took various forms and broke many of the traditional male-female roles, with men taking on jobs such as child care, transportation and sanitation.

The extensive support from all sections of Australian society indicated how this unique peace action inspired people. Trade unions, churches, many women's and peace groups, plus thousands of individuals assisted financially.

Women at Greenham Common peace camp sent part of the fence which "protects" the US air base, remodelled as "a wheel of peace." Women at Pine Gap reciprocated with part of the fence of the US war base situated in the centre of Australia.

Women's International Democratic Federation called for the release of all arrested women and greetings were received from the Revolutionary Union of Congo Women, the Icelandic Women for Culture and Peace and many other women and peace groups on all continents.

Across Australia thousands of people participated in support actions held simultaneously with the two week women's peace camp. At the rally in Sydney, Freda Brown brought solidarity greetings from the Women's International Democratic Federation.

TUC Women's Conference Demand no Discrimination

MORE than 323 delegates gathered for the biggest-ever TUC Women's Conference. Several of the trade unions had substantially increased the size of their delegations this year (1984). Many new faces appeared in the conference hall. The conference's packed agenda covered everything from employment opportunities for women to calls for medical tests on those working with visual display units. Low pay, sexual harassment, leave for working parents, homelessness, families in the third world, and need for equal opportunities. Commission for Racial Equality was among the items debated with much concern.

Barbara Swizer headed the delegation 'Tass'. She moved one of the most important motions of the entire two days, that on equal pay laws to change the position where women now earn 75 per cent of man's earnings.

"The law informs that we have a right to equal pay for work of equal value. Our duty is to ensure that we get it" she said. While being critical of the equal pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983, which came into effect on New Year's Day this year, the conference agreed that unions should utilise the regulations to advance women's pay and conditions. This motion was intended to give new impetus to an equal pay campaign. Whether it succeeds depends on us and the unions they represent. The TUC Women's Advisory Committee was called upon to do a survey of affiliated unions to see how women members' earnings have dropped in relation to men's and why.

The Families of the British Miners Against Pit Closures

One of the most remarkable developments that have ever taken place in the industrial struggles of Great Britain is the participation of families of miners in the present 24 week of the strike. More than 20,000 women marched through London on 11th August 1984 (Report in Sept. Issue), in support of the strike, Women's support groups all over the country, not only are in the soup kitchens, feeding miners, strikers and pickets, but also have been engaged in meetings, propaganda, distributing

leaflets and also picketting at the coal pits. It is a wonderful development according to the leaders of the strike and the women are determined not to be just standing behind the men, but to be with them in the battleline. They are fighting for their families and communities also.

Condolence Message From The Soviet Women's Committee

With deep sorrow and angry condemnation soviet women learnt the tragic news about villainous assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India. Wrold has lost outstanding stateswoman and public figure who devoted all, her life to struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racism, for national independence and economic and social progress of her country. Sharing your deep mourning, we express our wholehearted sympathy and condolences to women and all people of India. Bright memory of Indira Gandhi will inspire us to further strengthen friendship between Soviet and Indian women, between peoples of USSR and India.

Following reply was sent to the Soviet Women's Committee by Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, AICCW

Dear Comrade,

Thank you for your message of deep sorrow and condemnation of Soviet Women's Committee about villaineous assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India and of whole hearted sympathy and condolences to women and people of our country.

We note the rich tributes that have been paid to Smt. Gandhi for her struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racism, for national independence and progress of the country. The message conveys the deep feelings of Soviet Union towards the people of our country.

We assure you our continued struggle against the dangers of Nuclear War and for peace, progress and socialism. We uphold the treaty of peace & friendship and cooperation between our two countries and our two organisations shall continue to be strengthened in future.

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WITHOUT COMMENTS

Take Interest in Womens' Hostels: Social Welfare Ministry

SOcial Welfare Ministry has asked State Governments to take more interest in the construction and running of hostels for working women. It has got a new scheme which gives a grant of 75 per cent of the cost of construction to voluntary agencies for building such hostels. The scheme has been amended to enable children of working women to stay in the hostels.

The Ministry, however, has not received any favourable reply from the states on the construction of working women's hostels. Not only that, the Ministry has also received complaints that there is a lot of delay by State Governments in forwarding applications to the ministry, with the result that cost estimates for the buildings get outdated! The ministry, therefore has asked state Governments to examine the applications quickly.

Education Minister's Promise—Protective Home in Every District

The Union Education Minister Mrs. Shiela Kaul said in one of the functions on 25th October 1984 that the Centre has decided to provide one rescue or protective home in every district of the country by 1990 for rehabilitating prostitutes and homeless girls. At present 118 rescue and protective homes were functioning in various parts of the country, providing shelter to about 6000 destitutes. The Government intends to open at least 300 similar additional protective homes in the country.

No doubt, this is big plan to be finished by 1990. The Education Ministry desires to curb the Immoral Trafficking on women and girls. She said the Government had deputed 1452 policemen to work as a special force under SITA.

The daily news appearing in the press about the protective homes like Nari Niketan, belie all hopes of protecting these women and leading them to normal human beings!

Harijans are Meant to be Raped

Chandramohini, a woman homemaker, a harijan had complained to the Chief magistrate of Jeypore in Koraput Orissa rape case that she was raped by the staff of a private bus in the presence of local police station in charge, Mohan Rao and second officer, Nath Choudhari on the night of July 1983. She alleged the officers refused to register complaint saying "Harijans are meant to be raped" and pressurised the staff of the local hospital not to examine her. Mr. Rao got a blank paper signed and threatened that her legs would be broken if she divulged 'the facts'. Later she went to the CJM's court. Chandramohini said the CJM Mr. Udainath after seeing the blood-stained cloth, was listening to her story directed her to be examined by a lady doctor. Thereafter she was cheated. Again she returned to the CJM and told him to be examined by another doctor. Then only CJM called the station diary of the Jeypore Police and ordered an inquiry under section 154 Cr. P.C. It is reported that after the inquiry by the DIG, Mr. Rao and Mr. Choudhari were suspended. The case handed over to crime branch, is still continuing. This is the way the Harijans are treated under the rule.

Women Job-Seekers

The number of women job-seekers increased from 31.38 lakhs at the end of December 1982 to 35.82 lakhs at the end of December 1983 showing a rise of 14.1 per cent. During the period January to December, 1983, 65.6 thousand women job-seekers were placed in employment as against 63.0 thousand during the corresponding period in 1982 showing a rise of 4.1 per cent.