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Martyrs column of those who gave their lives during the patriotic war in Soviet Union

Greetings to Soviet Women

ON the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Victory over Fascism, the working women of our country proudly greet the heroic and fighting women and men of Soviet Union. We cherish the memory of those heroines like Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya of USSR Anne Frank of Netharlands and thousands of others who fell on the battleground while defending their country. A school girl like Zoya who threw molotov cocktells at the enemy and got killed is one of the many instances of indomitable courage of men and women to destroy the enemy at whatever cost. The name of Zoya was on everybody's lips in our country on whom songs were composed and sung by the people. The battle of stalingrad, and ignominious defeat for the Hilterites will be ever remembered by our people.

Soviet women inscribed many glorious pages of heroism in this Patriotic war fought between 1941 to 1945. They built tanks and dug anti-tank ditches, built scraps, counter-scraps and pillboxes on the defence lines set up around Moscow. The young girls worked on the industrial construction projects, they attended the open hearth furnaces and blast furnaces at iron and steel mills, they operated machine tools. 800,000 Soviet women donned the military uniforms. It was reported that 40 per cent of the country's tractor drivers and 43 per cent of the combine operators were women. The tremendous and hard services women performed in the hospitals, on the battlefields, day in day out to save the wounded was unparallel in the annals of the history. Thousands came forth for blood donation. Those mothers who could not go to the front like Anastasia Kuprianova, gave their sons for the battlefield many of whom never returned to their homes. People in Soviet Union remember with reverence the mother patriot monument of Anastania whose five sons were killed in the patriotic war, reminding everyone the sacrifice, the heroism of women.

Many bourgeois countries thought that

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Hitler will enter Moscow and succeed in routing Soviet Union. It was beyond their imagination as to how the men and women could liberate their country and other nations who had already gone under the Hitlers heels, when twenty million men and women got killed, the cities after cities were razed to the ground, houses were burnt. On 22nd June 1941, the Soviet people rose up to defend their homeland as one man against the invasion by Nazi Germany. The Communist Party of Soviet Union, under the leadership of great

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Nurses Struggle—Nurses Win

Ranjana Narula, Delhi

THE normally busy hospital complex wore a desolate, deserted look, with a few people walking around. The usual scurrying, white-clad figures were nowhere to be seen in the hospital. Outside the building, in the garden, under a shamiana, several hundred women sat on dharna. Over 1000 nurses of Jaya Prakash Narayan Hospital, G.B. Pant Hospital and Guru Nanak Eye Centre, went on strike from 11th April, 1985.

They were protesting because the earlier settlement after their one day strike in September 1984 had not been implemented by the Delhi Administration. After waiting patiently for seven months, when all their pleas fell on deaf ears, the nurses decided that they would have to take to the path of struggle, once again, to get implementation of the demands conceded earlier.

Mrs. Chauhan, the Vice-president of the Delhi Prantiya Nurses Sabha related the numerous problems the nurses face, and their horrifying conditions of work.

When on night duty, just one nurse has to look after 60-70 patients. The staff nurses are in charge of the general, linen and medical stores, and if anything is lost or stolen the recovery is made from their salaries. So in addition to the administrative work involved they are held responsible for all loss/theft of articles.

Their pay-scales are lower than in the hospitals run by the Central Government, and Mrs. Sharma, a senior sister told me that after 20 years of service she receives about Rs. 1300/- p.m. as salary and then deductions are made from this for any items lost or stolen.

With so many women working in the hospital round-the-clock and many living in the hostels, the security arrangements are deplorable. The paths from the hospital building to the nurses hostel are not lighted properly and there have been cases of chain snatching when the nurses return to the hostel after late duties. Every evening there is a whole line up of men

on scooters inside the camps as well as outside, trying to pick up the nurses going home or to the hostels. In the wards, there are no chowkidars on duty at night, including repair of heaters etc. since the hospital workshop has not been functioning since the past two years.

The evening shift at the hospital is from 2.30 p.m. to 9 p.m. By the time the nurses hand over charge and leave it is normally 9.30 to 10 p.m. so they do not reach home until 11 p.m. or even later, in the case of those coming from as far as Faridabad and Shahadra. The night shift entails 11½ hours duty, from 9 p.m. to 8.30 a.m. In both the evening and night shifts the nurses face a big problem with conveyance. Their plight can well be imagined when Delhi is totally unsafe for women travelling alone anytime after dark. The nurses have repeatedly asked the authorities for more housing facilities and for conveyance to go home after the evening shift and, to come to the hospital on the night shift, but until the struggle, these demands were not conceded.

In spite of all the hardships the nurses face and the vital services they perform, the status of the nurses in the hospital leaves much to be desired. They are underpaid, over burdened with administrative work and overworked and yet they are held responsible for anything that goes wrong. Ultimately, it is the nurses who spend the most time caring for the patients, but the credit when all goes well is given to the doctors, and the blame for inefficiency or malfunctioning apportioned to the nurses. Under such conditions is it possible for anyone to function any better?

When the strike started, the hospital administration stated that the working of the hospital was not seriously affected. The hollowness of this claim was exposed when work in the hospital ground to a near standstill in just two days. The nurses, who are such an essential part of the hospital do not get the respect and consideration they merit.

For six days, the strike continued with

complete unity. On the sixth day the strike was declared illegal by the Delhi Administration, and ESMA was imposed on the hospitals. The next day, while discussions were in progress, two office-bearers of the union were arrested. The nurses stood firm, and by the afternoon, almost all their demands were conceded by the administration. The legitimacy of their demands is evident from the fact that the strike period has been adjusted against leave due to the nurses. The nurses showed their fine sense of responsibility by returning to duty immediately.

The demands they have won are:—

1. Uniform arrears from 1982 will be paid with the April salary. The demand for increase in uniform allowance from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 1000 per annum has been referred to the Pay Commission.

2. Unmarried nurses will receive house rent. Separate housing is being arranged for nurses on campus.

3. Nurses will receive an operation theatre allowance of Rs. 30/- per month with effect from April 1985.

4. The stipend for student nurses has been raised from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- per month.

5. Selection grade will be given to part time nurses.

6. Nursing sisters will now keep charge of only medicines and injection stocks. All other stocks will be centralised.

7. Two extra off days per month will be given in lieu of over time, until a decision is reached regarding double duties.

8. Within two months bus arrangements will be made to drop nurses on the evening shift and to pick up nurses on the night shift.

The nurses are elated over their glorious victory but are alert, in case once again, the Administration goes back on its commitment as it did earlier. Sister Santosh, active member of the nurses Sabha told me, "If this happens, we are united and ready for further struggle". With the support of the nurses in other hospitals and of the CITU and Coordination Committee of Working Women and other organisations of Employees, they are confident that they will win their pending demands.

Rajasthan Nurses too go on Strike

About 13,000 nursing staff all over Rajasthan went on strike on 16th of April 1985 in support of their 18 point demand charter. The State Government declared the strike illegal and instructed doctors to be available round the clock to tackle the situation. The Chief Medical Health Officers have also been authorised to employ compounders on a daily wage.

The three day old strike was called off after the fruitful negotiations between the Chief secretary and the representatives of the striking nurses.

CITU and AICCWW Supports Nurses' Struggle

THE CITU and All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, while fully supporting the demands of the nurses who are on strike for 5 days now, condemn the unsympathetic attitude of the Ministry towards settling the demands despite the tremendous sufferings of the patients of the JPN, G.B. Pant and Maulana Azad Hospitals. The genuine demands of the thousands of nurses such as immediate payment of the arrears of 2 years, increase in stipend of Rs. 150 and their coverage under the workmen's compensation Act, early payment of the uniform allowance and referring the issue of implementation of selection grade for nurses to the Finance

Ministry are some of the burning issues for which they were compelled to go on strike. More than 500 nurses in their uniforms even went in a demonstration to the residence of the Minister to plead for their case. It is condemnable that despite the sufferings of the people, the Minister of Health and Family Welfare refused to meet the long pending genuine demands of the nurses and compelled them to prolong the strike.

While congratulating the nurses for their determined struggle, the CITU and AICCWW demand of the Central Government to immediately settle their demands and bring in normalcy in the Hospitals.

Convention of Working Women in Durgapur

A convention of the working women in various fields of work in Durgapur Steel Plant and Alloy Steel Plant comprising of 300 delegates representing 2000 working women was held on 28th March 1985 at Durgapur under the auspices of Steel Workers' Federation of India. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women and Banani Biswas, leader of Democratic Women's Association, West Bengal addressed the convention.

The delegates attending the convention expressed their grave concern over the growing incidents of tortures on woman folk in different parts of the country. The convention discussed the general problems of women as a whole and what they face as working women in particular.

The delegates expressed their apprehension that modernisation would create a serious problem displacing many of them from their working field. They urged upon the Convention to build up effective resistance against it. Many of the delegates mentioned the absence of creche. For this they have to work under constant mental anxieties. The women working under contractors gave vent to their great resentments over their non-employment

in permanent jobs even after 10/12 years. They mentioned the lack of medical and educational facilities though they perform most hazardous and laborious jobs. Many delegates dwelt upon the problems of conveyance to working place and accommodation. The nursing staff do not even have any room to change their dress.

Vimala Ranadive called upon the working women to fight for their problems through massive organised struggle. A resolution was adopted at this convention proposing a standing Co-ordinating body for working women and a committee was accordingly elected consisting of 37 members. A steering Committee of ten was also formed with Shanti Chatterjee as President of both these committees. The Committees will function under the guidance of SWFI.

A mass meeting of working women was held with the help of Durgapur Unit of Democratic Women's Association after delegates session. Vimala Ranadive and Banani Biswas addressed the gathering.

The Convention ended with a cultural programme participated by the working women themselves.

Tamilnadu Co-ordination Committee Meets

TAMILNADU Working Women Co-ordination Committee met on 14th March 1985 at Madras. All India W.W.C.C. Secretary Com. Vimal Ranadive and State CITU Secretariat members Com. Umanath and A.K. Padmanabhan attended the meeting. Committee members from 4 districts, namely from Madras, Trichi, North Arcot and Ramnad districts attended. Com. Papa from Ramnad district reported that at Virudhunagar 182 women working in Nutrition food scheme organised a conference to discuss and focus their problems in the scheme, which was managed by the Madras government. Com. Savithri on behalf of the W.W.C.C. greeted the conference. She was nominated as one of the committee members on the committee. Com. Papa posed a problem, as to how to organise the women

workers in Match and crackers factories. There are many ladies who involved themselves in breaking of Thurdal. The working ladies are facing many problems. How to approach and organise is the question.

Com. Hema, Chandra and Vasugi reported about the conferences at 7 places in Tiruchi. They conducted the lunch hour meeting at E.B. and other places and reported about the conference. At BHEL the women employee's demand is for creche facility. But at the same time it is difficult to organise them. The demand for working women hostel some how mooted up and they are in the way to establish one such hostel. But the demand for the creche has not been taken shape. The union of the BHEL should be firm in putting forth this

demand before management where there are 500 ladies employed. The demand is just and the union should actively take up the matter. Com. Vimal also gave her suggestion that if the demand comes through union to All India Coordination Committee, they will take up the matter from the centre. In BHEL widows employees were given jobs at the Welfare Centre. In that centre they faced many problems. In handloom and Beedi, many ladies were working, and they were facing lot of problems.

Com. Savithri from North Arcot reported about the activities on women. Regarding the working women hostel and creche the correspondence is going on with Social Welfare Board.

She reported about the event in connection with the Vellore Telephone Exchange. A group of people with a view to spoil the name of the working women, put their names in the notice board pairing with men employees. W.W.C.C. intervened and a petition was given to A.E. to take serious note of the matter and conduct the enquiries. The Telephone ladies observed one day Dharna also. Management after conducting the enquiry transferred the 6 operators and 2 Ayas. In postal Department union, women are in the office bearer post.

Gowri reported about the activities at many places in Madras and about the state conference. When enmass transfer took place at E.B. affecting the working women, W.W.C.C. presented a petition to the Chief Secretary. In connection with the Nutrition food scheme, Co-ordination committee is associated with one forum or the other. She also reported that there are bright chances to form Coordination Committees, at Guindy, Pallavaram and Leather company and at Ambattur, where many factories are located. CITU has to help to form such committees.

To conduct Committee meeting the working timings of labour class and middle class is not suitable. In connection with Sindhanai, only Madras district has got large subscription about 1000 copies. Com. Saraswathi spoke about the functioning of W.W.C.C. Com. Savithri of North Arcot also participated in the discussion. Com. Mythily gave the suggestion that, they can have W.W.C.C. in each Industrial belt like Guindy and Ambattur, where there are no unions, by convincing the ladies that only CITU union can help to solve the women's problems. She also suggested that by way of

concentrating in one area we can start functioning.

Com. Vimal Ranadive narrated various examples of the struggle launched by working women. Com. Umanath while summing up the discussion said Working women come under the working class. No history of trade union passes without participation of working women. So in the Working Class amovement, involve the working women to make understand that they are part and parcel of the working class. So here comes the class consciousness. This is the central point. They belong to same working class with different sectors — organised as well as unorganised etc. and the approach is also different, according to the problem and the type of Industry. In unorganised sector of Industry where T.U. is not there, how can we build up working class unity. So first and foremost duty before us is to form trade unions.

CITU stands for Socialism. For this, we have to build up a class consciousness by uniting the working class with peasantry. Such a kind of unity could be possible on the basis of economic demands. To achieve this great task before us we have to organise the working women. First we have to unionise them.

In an industry many unions may be there but many are not members of any Union. Even where CITU Union exists, there also CITU may not be in a position to unionise women. In middle class employees such as central Government and State Govt. where other unions are there W.W.C.C. has its purpose to function. Following are the tasks before us:

1. To bring working women in the T.U. movement. In an unorganised sector CITU should directly involve the workers and coordination committee has its own responsibilities.

2. At the time of forming TU policies, working women also should participate;

3. Women should be promoted to TU leadership.

4. As women, they are facing some special problems. Those should be taken up and fought for.

5. At the time of retrenchment, the burden falls on womenfolk only. So women have to pressurise the TU to take up such problems.

6. Apart from other demands like creche, for rest room facilities also WWCC should represent.

In an unorganised sector, once you form a union, victimisation is more, but we have no other alternative. Without unionising such a

sector we cannot achieve the working class unity. With this broad perspective WWCC has to function.

Com. Umanath replied to the queries by saying that WWCC could be activated by activating CITU in that area. If CITU is not active then WWCC has to take the initiative to organise the women's meetings. He told that rather men talking about the women's problem if women talk about their problems at the gate meetings, that will have its own way of appealing the women.

Following are the Committee's Decisions

1. District committees should organise the

meetings and activate the District units. Presently, the existing DC's could be activated before 30th April.

2. It was decided to conduct a convention for the women in organised sector in August '85 at Coimbatore and Madurai.

3. To increase the sale of Sindanai and 'Voice of Working Women', the DC's has to decide the quota.

4. June 1st International Children Day should be observed with DWA and CITU. The way of observance should be decided by the DC.

5. District Committee should send periodical report to the Centre, about the Working Women Movement. And the same should be consolidated and reported to All India.

Report from Tamil Nadu

ON March 16th and 17th we had All India Democratic Women's Association Committee meetings at Madras. Com. Vimal Ranadive and Com. Ahalya Rangnekar with their presence, three lunch time meetings were arranged in three offices, at Madras, at RBI Electricity Board and Postal Audit.

In R.B.I. Com. Vimal addressed the lunch hour meeting in ladies lunch room. More than 250 ladies attended the meeting with good response. In Electricity Board Com. Ahalya gave gate meeting speech. With short notice about 40 to 50 ladies assembled in the gate. Many men also attended.

Com. Vimal Ranadive spoke in the meeting at Post and Audit office. The meeting was arranged in short notice, even then 60 ladies participated.

Some ladies from Electricity Board approached Women's Co-ordination Committee with problem which they face when transferred. The problems are as follows.

1. As most of them are senior ladies with children once the mother is transferred, whole family is put into trouble.

2. The transfer has not taken place with any norms. Many ladies were put into transfers because they have not yielded themselves to the whims and fancies of their male immediate superiors.

3. As they were transferred from 200 to 400 Kms from their place Boarding and Lodging is the perennial problem. Due to lack of Working Womens Hostel they face the accom-

modation problem. House owners are not giving accommodation for women. Once women go and ask for accommodation they are looked upon as degraded status. WWCC decided to give petition to the Chairman of EB and to the Minister incharge. Accordingly on 3rd April Committee met the Chairman of EB and handed over the petition. When it put forth the difficulties of working mother, he heard everything without any comment. And at last he said it is their administrative policy. He has assured them that when any lady comes with problem, he will try to solve it. After fixing an appointment with Minister Committee will go and meet the Minister.

WWCC gave a telegram to the chairman in connection with the accident at Ennore E.B. killing many women employees.

The 3rd Conference of Indian Bank Employees Association, which was affiliated with the BEFI has held at Salem on 13th & 14th of April, 1985.

The Organisation which is in growing state, has few lady comrades as delegates. Compared to last Conference, where only 2 ladies attended, this time 9 lady delegates were there. 13th being Tamil New Year's day, many ladies come out to attend the conference.

The open Session was addressed by Trade Union leaders from PTC, Govt. Employees Association, CITU etc. A lady comrade from Shevapet, felt and expressed her view that why lady speakers are not there, which also shows the awareness.

Convention of Women College Teachers of Tamilnadu

IT was an unusual sight. The convention venue at Madurai was teeming with hundreds of women teachers down from fifty colleges from all over Tamilnadu. It was evident that a new awakening was stirring these highly educated, but usually docile and submissive section of women. This first convention of women college teachers was organised by the Joint Action Council of College Teachers of Tamilnadu comprising the three college teachers' Associations, AUT (Association of University Teacher), MUTA (Madurai University Teachers Association) and TNGCTA (Tamilnadu Govt. Collegiate Teachers' Association). The convention was organised to focus on the serious erosion of democratic rights in women's college and the atmosphere of repression and harassment that prevails in them.

The Women's Colleges in the state are alarming instances of the semi-feudal ethos that activates them. The authorities fully use and misuse their rights and discover loopholes in the existing legislations and rules and take full advantage of them. In addition, they resort to tactics of harassment and intimidation, of exerting every sort of psychological pressure, to deny women teachers their rights. Minority-run institutions, especially, are an open scandal.

Teachers are deprived of the right to security of service, to promotions increments and other benefits. Instances of the many malpractices prevalent in women's colleges; delayed payment of salary, maternity leave salary being delayed by almost three years, not opening provident fund accounts for teachers, leave rules not being implemented, exploitation in the form of excessively heavy load of work and the authorities resorting to terminations, suspensions and cumulative increment cuts on flimsy grounds.

In a large number of Women's colleges in the state, teachers are not allowed to form associations. Denied of this basic democratic right, women associations have somehow come into existence, all forms of intimidation and harassment are used to break them. The very

existence of teachers' association is taken as an affront and a challenge to their authority by managements. Members of associations, especially the activists are victimised in many ways like denial of promotion chances, increment cuts with cumulative effect, transfers in Govt. Colleges and wholesale closure of courses.

The most significant area, however, where the undemocratic and repressive character of the administration in women's colleges is seen is the intangible one of psychological pressure.

The person in authority, a secretary, correspondent or Principal, replicates within the College the sadistic mother-in-law syndrome at home. The weakness and submissiveness of women is taken full advantage of and an authoritarian pattern of functioning is established. The weapons the authorities use against teachers are inexhaustible in their number of variety. Whispering campaign and character assassination against teachers are unleashed. A teacher who displays the slightest semblance of independence is bombarded with memos. Participation in democratic activities is considered a crime and serious charges are framed against teachers. The anti-deluvian Govt. Servants Conduct Rules, framed during the colonial period come in handy as a tool of intimidation and repression.

There are instances of even inhuman violations of human rights in women's colleges. The director of a women's college, a Home Science college, sent round a circular telling the faculty members to so arrange their pregnancies that they will deliver babies during summer vacation. She also forced a pregnant faculty member to run around the college campus till she aborted.

The College is but an organios cell of the society around and cannot be artificially insulated and protected from the social forces operating outside. We cannot dismiss the reality that this is a society, where women's enslavement is a corner stone of the value system. "And, what are we the most highly educated section of women, doing to improve

the conditions of women? We have, by and large, lapsed into a state of complacency and resignation. Hundreds of young women pass through our hands every year, but we have failed to impart to them values of women's equality and the courage, determination and a sense of solidarity needed to face the sexist onslaught of life in our society". "The convention provides us an opportunity to reevaluate our roles, to merge us with and even to take the initiative in the movement for the liberation of women".

We are especially qualified to contribute in two important areas, towards bringing justice to woman. One is organising campaigns to create an awareness of the injustices done to women as we are a highly educated and articulate section of women. Second area is in bringing about changes in the educational system to provide equal educational opportunities and training to women and to eliminate the sexist bias in the educational system. We hope to evolve out of the convention, programmes for the above two purposes".

The convention was also to remember and acknowledge the heroic struggles that have broken out in women's colleges against a semi-feudal oppression and against heavy odds. The most noteworthy examples are the ones in S.I.E.T. College, Madras D.K.M. College, Vellore, Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore, Sarada College, Salem, and S.A. College, Pallathur.

Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi, the convenor, presented a charter of demands for women college teachers to the Tamilnadu Minister for Education, Shri Aranganyagam, who inaugurated the convention. The Education Minister of Tamilnadu, who inaugurated the convention said that only in socialist countries women enjoyed equal rights with men. He appealed to women teachers not to confine themselves to their exclusive problems, but to take up the cause of women in general, and fight to get them their rights.

Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, former Supreme Court judge, delivered the key-note address. He urged women teachers to first become conscious of their rights and fight unitedly to achieve them. He pointed out how women were being deprived of equal rights even

though under the Constitution there was no difference between men and women. He cited the restrictions on air-hostesses getting married before completing two or three years of service. Even in the judiciary there was discrimination. The Supreme Court did not have a single woman judge. All this was so because the Indian blood was still masculine, he declared. Women have been deprived of their rights for centuries but "women's deliverance means man's deliverance, which means human deliverance," he said.

He wanted women to enjoy equal rights in choosing their lifepartners and said they should fight the evil of dowry system and 'donatlons' to educational institutions for admission.

Charter of Demands

1. In the present state of teachers rights in women's college a machinery must be created to constantly supervise the implementation in women's colleges of rights guaranteed to teachers. As autonomous body democratically constituted to represent teachers organisations should be invested with powers to take drastic steps against erring managements,

2. The maximum age for recruitment of women should be revised so that a middle aged women can also enter the teaching profession.

3. Arrangements such as creches or nurseries should be provided to take care of the children of teachers. Family quarters for women teachers within the college campus or adjacent to it must be provided. Hostel facilities should be provided for women staying away from their families.

4. Measures should be taken to permit women teachers with family responsibilities to obtain teaching posts in the locality of their homes and to enable married couples, both of whom are teachers, to teach in the same neighbourhood or in the same institution.

5. In appropriate circumstances women teachers with family responsibilities who have left the profession before retirement age should be encouraged to return to teaching.

6. Women teachers should be given special

leave when their children below 5 years fall sick.

7. Women should be allowed to move from full time teaching post to part time teaching post and vice versa depending upon their family situation.

8. Adequate toilet facilities and rest rooms should be provided in women's colleges and hostels.

The charter also contained certain general proposals to eliminate inequalities between men and women in the field of education and to direct campus activities to promote values of women's equality.

(1) A strong directive is to be given to build into campus activities, in both women's and men's colleges, programmes to create an awareness of the woman's position and to fight against injustices done to her. A sizeable part of the time and resources allotted to schemes like N.S.S., C.S.S., College union activities etc. should be devoted to such programmes. The programmes should include campaigns carrying the message of women's equality into the community. An evaluation system with black-marking for non-performance in this area must be devised.

(2) The existing inequalities between men and women in educational opportunities and technical training must be eliminated. The number of women students at all levels of education, including in professional courses like medicine, engineering and polytechnic must be increased to become equal to that of men. A large number of polytechnics providing admission to women students must be created. All the courses available in men's polytechnics should be open to women students.

(3) For implementing the proposals above, state level committees must be formed to make policy recommendations. These committees should represent teachers' associations, women activities, and educationists.

The former Justice also pointed out that workers' participation in management was guaranteed in the constitution and women teachers should fight for this right through legal means. Article 43(A) said that there should be participation of workers in the

management in every establishment, undertaking or industry and since the Supreme Court had clarified that colleges and universities were industries, teachers working in such institutions had the right to participate in the management.

He decried the existing legislation which denied the right of appeal to teachers subjected to minor punishments given by the managements and urged that the government should issue an ordinance restoring this right.

He also criticised the mismanagement in some educational institutions belonging to minority communities. The judgement given by a seven-member bench of the Supreme Court in St. Xavier's College case has given encouragement to such managements, misusing their position and powers to accumulate wealth. The Constitution, he said, had only protected the minorities' right to preserve their language and religion.

In the symposium held in the afternoon session papers were presented on the following themes. "Women and Work" by Dr. U. Kalpagam, "Women's Education" by Prof. Prema Arunachalam, "Problems and Struggles of women college Teachers", by Dr. Sivakama Sundari, "Culture and Women's Consciousness" by Prof. Saraswathi Govindarajan, "Women and Trade Unionism" by Ms. Mythili Sivaraman and "Facing the Challenge the Tasks Ahead" by Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi. There was an exhibition on "Women in History" that presented the various dimensions of the women's question in historical perspective.

The College teachers' associations of Tamilnadu did not plan this convention as a one-day programme, but as the beginning of, what they hope, would grow into a movement. Plans for follow-up work have been formulated. Committees are being formed to take up tasks of organisation building, of evolving campus programmes to create awareness of the woman's problem, of identifying sexist bias in our educational system and curricula and eliminating them, of conducting campaigns against injustices to women and of net-working among women's groups to evolve a minimum platform.

A placard at the exit read: "Women! The rest of our lives must be spent in the best of struggles!"

Vibha Ghosh Goswami Speaks on Ministry of Social & Women's Welfare on 2nd May, 1985

SO far as I remember, during the last three years, we went without discussing the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture and last year, if I remember correctly, this Ministry's demands were not even put on the list of business. It is good that we have now got this opportunity to discuss this Ministry's demand.

I concentrate mainly on Women's welfare and development. Here in the annual report of the Ministry, there has been a mention about the report of the Committee on Status of Women in India. The report was submitted on 31st December, 1974. There is also a mention of national plan of action on that report. The report of the Committee on Status of Women emphasised the need for agencies of coordination, communication and implementation of measures to improve the status of women.

Now, 10 years after that report was submitted, the conditions are more or less the same. Now that the Ministry of Women's Welfare has been created, all aspects of women's welfare and development should be the concern of this Ministry. That is my demand.

Regarding policy, the Status Committee has said, "Any programme of women's welfare and development must have an integrated approach. In order to prevent any ambiguity in the understanding of what constitute women's welfare..."

I want to underline the words "in order to prevent any ambiguity in the understanding of what constitutes women's welfare". "...and to prevent the development of policies that sometimes go against the basic objective, we recommended that the Government of India should evolve a national policy on women's development in the light of Constitutional directives and pledges made to the women in this country and to the international community from time to time."

This is what the Status Committee on Women recommended. Now, we are at

the fag end. I do not know of any such national policy on women's welfare and development that has been evolved. The report of the Ministry says that the Ministry is going to formulate the new policies. Before the general elections, a lot of noise had been made about the Government being very serious in women's development. In practice, we see the same anti-people policies being pursued by the Government and that further erodes the status of women. The amount of priority which this Government attaches to this Department is judged by the allocation of funds to this Ministry, the percentages of allocation of funds is only 0.25 per cent of the total budget of this year.

Out of Rs. 51,295 crores of budgeted expenditure of this year, Rs. 129 crores is given here. Last year, it was Rs. 92, crores. That was revised estimate for 1984-85. This year it is Rs. 129 crores. Now, to argue that it is more than last years allocation in terms of rupees is, to my mind, behaving like the proverbial person who goes without shoes and finds solace by comparing his plight to a footless person. We all know that the progress of any society is measured by the status of women. Our Constitution declares that socialism is our objective. But even by ordinary bourgeoisie-democratic standard, or by any standard for the matter, the conditions of majority of our women are horrible and to change these, we have to change the total social and economic structure of the society which the Government is not going to do. Instead of changing its priorities, the Government's policies are worsening the conditions of our women in the society. Women are worst-hit by the rising prices and by the rising unemployment. Here I have got something from the Seventh Five Year Plan about the employment of women. This is from the journal Working Woman:

"The number of women job-seekers, according to labour Ministry, increased from 22,60 lakhs in October 1981 to 30,70 lakhs at the end of October 1982 showing an increase of 15.2 per cent. During January-October, '82

only 48,990 women were placed in employment as against 50,615 during 1981, the decline being 2.5 per cent.

Thus women job-seekers are on the increase and their placements in employment are on the decline.

What did the national plan of action say categorically? I would like to quote it again because the present Government's policy of indiscriminate mechanisation and import liberalisation is going to hit women hardest because they are the last to be hired and the first to be fired.

"The Constitution guarantees equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment and directs the State to secure equal right to an adequate mean of livelihood, equal pay for equal work and just and humane conditions of work. The impact of transition to a modern economy has resulted in the exclusion of an increasing number of women from active participation in the productive process and only a limited recognition of their contribution and ability to contribute."

We all know — and it is an accepted fact — that economic independence of women is the most vital pre-requisite of equality. Widening of opportunities to take part in socially productive labour will change the situation. But what is being done? Government has so far done precious nothing to counter the detrimental impact of modernisation on women's employment. I want the Ministry of Women's Welfare to have the jurisdiction and also the funds, the means, to effectively prevent and counteract this detrimental effect of modernisation on the welfare of women.

What situation we are facing at the fag-end of the Women's Decade? During the 20-year period from 1961 to 1981 the female population shot up by 55 per cent, but the female work participation rate has gone down; it has decreased by one-fourth from 28 per cent, it has come down to less than 21 percent. According to the 1981 census, 51 per cent males have full-time jobs as against only 14 per cent females. This is the mockery of equality of opportunity that we have in this country. In agriculture, the percentage of women-participants is more or less the same. But there is

something which is worrying us very much and that is more and more women are being pushed towards agricultural labour. Look at the stark number. The number of male cultivators in 1961 was 63.6 million and in 1981 it went up to 76.2 million. But in the same 20 year period, the number of women cultivators came down from 31.8 million to 15.1 million, that is, it was less than half. This is what is being done to women who work not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of the entire family. Women are being pushed out of all organised industries systematically. This point also, we have tried to hammer again and again in this House but without any tangible results. In jute, textiles, plantation, mines, tobacco, coir, bidi, everywhere including the public sector enterprises, women are under attack. Machines replace thousands and lakhs of women. The Sixth Plan document, the Chapter on Women's Development promised that modernisation of traditional occupations of women would be selective and would include simultaneous development of skills for alternative employment. It also promised monitoring of the impact of the new programme and projects on women's employment. But nothing has been done in that regard. Therefore, I would urge on the Hon. Minister for Women's Welfare to take up this matter with the Labour Ministry and the Industries Ministry to do three things effectively and immediately, one to order a total ban on retrenchment of working women immediately and maintain at least the existing strength; number two, to cancel all licences granted for installation of green-leaf thrashing plants in the tobacco industry — otherwise, lakhs of women who are working in that industry will be affected; number three, to see that no mechanisation is allowed in the match industry where also the workers are mostly women. This must be done immediately to save our sisters working in those industries.

The National Plan of Action was chalked out some eight years back. In it there were specific recommendations regarding finding out areas of employment of women, review mechanism, followup action, data-collection, monitoring, etc. But so far the National Plan of Action has not been implemented. Practically nothing has been done materially. My demand is that the Ministry of women's welfare should be vested with the powers, funds, means and mechanisms of putting the National Plan into

action. The important recommendation of the Status Committee on setting up a statutory National Commission on women has been ignored during the whole of women's decade. It should be set up at once with the functions and composition as elaborated by the Committee on Status of women. The U.N. Commission on women has been ignored during the whole of women's decade. It should be set up at once with the functions and composition on status of women recommended establishment of such a commission in its 25th report. On 12-5-1983 in reply to a call attention motion on dwindling women's employment the then Labour Minister had said that setting up of such a commission is a matter for the Social Welfare Ministry to consider. Now, I would request the Minister to do it forthwith.

Another recommendation was that the Central Social Welfare Board and the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards should also be reorganised as statutory autonomous bodies on the lines recommended by the Status committee. This should also be done.

On 8th April, 1985, the All India Democratic Women's Association met the Prime Minister with a memorandum with comprehensive suggestions for action on all sectors—education, health, employment, legal status, etc. I may be permitted to lay a copy of this memorandum on the Table of the House for information of Members and also for the Minister to study and take proper steps.

Sir, I want to cite two specific instances of discrimination. In Vijayawada there were 120 women working as casual labour in Railways. Railways rule stipulate that after four months they are to be granted temporary status and finally absorbed as permanent railway workers. These women have got temporary status. But junior men to those women workers have been given permanent status while they have been left out. They have been discriminated against. I would request the Minister to look into the matter and see that they are taken as permanent employees.

Another telling instance of discrimination is that of one Manju Roy, a DVC worker posted at Panchet. She has been asking for transfer to Durgapur where her husband is working. But for the last six years, the better half of the Women's Decade, she could not be transferred to Durgapur. In Durgapur there

were many vacancies against which surplus labour was adjusted. I would request the Minister to take up this matter with the concerned Ministry for immediate redressal of this.

In the end, I would specifically suggest and demand three things:

(1) To give paid maternity leave and other maternity benefits to all women working in the unorganised sector including agriculture.

(2) To pay unemployment allowance to all persons.

(3) Now that the 7th Five Year plan is in the offering, to ensure earmarking of adequate resources in all sectoral plans and programmes to generate employment for women and give training to them.

...And then, last but not the least, much more allocation should be made to this Ministry to do justice to this nation.

Letter from African National Congress to AICWW

The following letter was received from Mrs Agness Msimang, Zambia in the month of April 1985.

My dearest Vimala,

Sending you, revolutionary greetings in the year of the Cadre.

Many thanks for the good work you are doing for our struggle. Keep it up.

Your article on the Year of the Women of South Africa was great. I am missing you all.

With revolutionary greetings,

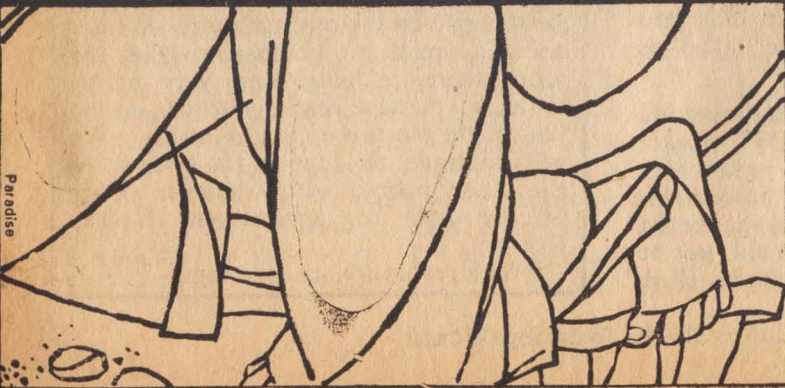
And the reply by AICWW to Mrs Msimang.

"I was very very happy, to receive your letter. We are closely watching the great and hard struggle of the South African people against the domination of the White regime. People in South Africa and in other States are supporting the struggle by various methods. We are doing a small bit comparing what the people there are doing. I am very happy to learn you have read my article on the year of the women of South Africa. We will continue to support the struggle of the black people with whatever efforts we are able to, against the Boatha Regime.

With revolutionary greetings.



May day'85



Labour Welfare Programmes of Left Front Govt. 1977-85

Some Highlights

Left Front Govt. has :

Successfully tackled various industrial disputes in Engineering, Textiles, Tea and Jute industries in favour of the workers.

Fixed the real wages of workers in view of continuing inflation.

Brought down the number of industrial closures from 847 cases in 1970-76 to 483 cases in 1977-83.

Suitably revised existing laws, wherever felt necessary and enacted new legislations in the interests of the workers such as Tindal Mazdoor Bill 1981 for guaranteeing service security in the organised sectors and Trade Unions Bill (West Bengal Amendment 1983), both now awaiting the President's consent.

Fixed the minimum wages in 36 unorganised sectors including farming.

Applied and implemented the E.S.I. scheme on a wide scale for labour welfare by way of constructing and opening more and more E.S.I. hospitals and dispensaries with an increased membership of 16 lakh 38 thousand workers under E.S.I. Scheme.

Introduced compulsory recruitment of candidates through Employment Exchange for Government offices after 1977.

Safeguarded Trade Union Rights and freedom.

Introduced un-employment allowance.

Announced, for the first time, a comprehensive Industrial Policy.

Initiated steps for a petrochemical industry in Haldia worth Rs. 844.4 crores.

Brought into being an Electronics Complex at Salt Lake.

Paved the way for a 280 acres export processing Zone at Falta.

Successfully revived closed and sick industries.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

The Record is Dismal—in Women's Decade —

Memorandum by AIDWA

The Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi
Dear Shri Gandhi,

As you are no doubt aware, the International Women's Decade, which was declared by the United Nations in 1975 comes to an end in June 1985. In the memorandum, we are submitting to you a brief review of the status of women in India as compared to 1975. Unfortunately, it is a grim reality that in many important spheres either there has been no improvement at all or the situation of women has deteriorated. We believe that only if there is a fundamental change in Government policy and approach and indeed in its very perception of women's problems, can the Constitutional guarantee of equality be realised. It is with this understanding that we give below some of the facts and our suggestions.

Employment

It is an accepted fact that the very concept of equality is based on the pre-requisite of economic independence. Unfortunately, the large majority of Indian women are deprived of gainful employment and chained to domestic drudgery. All talk of women's emancipation is a mockery unless women are provided with the opportunity to take part in social production. Moreover, without the security of an independent income, women often have to silently face brutal subjugation. But what steps has the Government taken in the last decade to provide women with jobs? The record is dismal.

The female workforce participation rate remains a low 20.85 per cent and only 14 per cent have full time work. According to the 1981 census 79 per cent of the female population are classified as non-workers. A striking feature affecting women's employment is the rapid growth of the unorganised sector of the economy where women are largely concentrated and the massive displacement and retrenchment of women owing to mechanisation. The plight of women who make up a large part of the workforce in the traditional industries

like coir, cashew, tobacco, beedi, matches, mines, tea is deplorable. They are confined to low skills, low pay and inhuman working conditions. Women are being forced to undertake home based production in beedi, papadmaking, garments, match, electronic components assembly which yield less than subsistence wages, requires the help of every family member particularly children. They remain largely unprotected by labour laws. The conditions of women working in the Post and Telegraphs, casual workers in the Railways and in the anganwadis are equally deplorable.

For example, mechanisation has threatened the employment of 2 lakhs of women in the tobacco industry in Andhra and Karnataka and already 15,000 women have been thrown out of their jobs with no alternative employment offered to them. In the coir industry in Kerala, about four lakh women get employment for less than 100 days each year. The whole move for mechanisation backed by the government in coir, match and a number of other industries is resulting in the displacement of female labour. In the Electronics industry, for example, where women are employed in large numbers, the government's new policy of liberalisation of imports is going to ruin numerous co-operatives and welfare institutions which have been formed.

We believe that the policy of indiscriminate mechanisation of labour intensive industries in the background of the massive unemployment situation in our country is suicidal as far as the interests of the working people go and in so far as women are generally the last to be hired and the first to be fired, this policy directly affects them adversely.

However, even for those women who are employed there have little or no improvement in their working conditions. The government as the biggest employer must bear the responsibility for the fact that there are not even the minimum facilities like creche, rest rooms, toilet facilities and maternity benefits. In fact, the government itself has set an example of

refusing to regularise the employment of thousands of women employees who have been working for years.

If we turn to the rural areas, we find the percentage of female agricultural workers has risen in the last decade. We firmly believe that this process can only be halted through radical land reforms to fundamentally alter the present concentration of land. Here unfortunately, the earlier promise of joint titles in the name of both the husband and wife for even the small amounts of surplus land distributed has not been implemented. Further, the Equal Remuneration Act is in fact, not implemented, if minimum wages in general for agricultural labourers are dismally low and by and large remain unimplemented, this is more so for women. We, therefore suggest the followings:

1. That no mechanisation to take place without guaranteed alternative employment.

2. Implementation of land reforms and distribution of land to the tillers and joint titles to the distributed land and the provision of financial and other assistance for proper cultivation of land. A scheme of agro-industries for rural development and for women's employment.

3. Earmarking of resources in all sectoral plans and programmes to give employment and training for women.

4. Expansion and provision of training opportunities for women in agriculture and agro-based industries and non-traditional occupation at the district level.

5. Provision of a network of child care centres within the minimum needs programme.

6. Extension of maternity benefit to all women workers including women in the unorganised and agricultural sectors.

7. All legislation pertaining to working women should be strictly implemented including the Equal Remuneration Act.

8. Employment or unemployment relief and uncouragement for registration of women at employment centres.

Education

From the days of our freedom movement, the important question of women's education has been on the national agenda. It is surprising considering that expenditure on education

is obviously a low priority since the Government has allocated just one per cent on education in its recent budget. In the decade there has been only a 6 per cent increase in the female literacy rate and the total number of females who are illiterate has increased from 215 million in 1971 to 250 million in 1983. According to a Ministry of Education data, 45.67 per cent of girls in the 6-11 age group, 75.68 per cent in the 11-14 age group and 85.94 per cent in the 14-17 age group, are still out of school. The literacy rate among scheduled castes at 21.38 per cent (10.93 per cent for girls) and 16.35 for scheduled tribes (8.04 per cent for girls) indicates the severity of the problem of women's education. Unfortunately it appears that the Government is unaware that a mere scheme to give free education to girls upto class 12 is not going to substantially change the situation. The problem is that, girls are forced to take up adult responsibilities of looking after younger children in their families, participate in household work or add to the family income. Therefore, back up facilities will have to be provided if they are to attend school such as creche facilities, mid day meals, etc. In fact, in those areas where female literacy is below 20 per cent as in U.P., Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh etc, material incentives are required to ensure attendance of girl students.

We, therefore suggest the following:

1. A 10 per cent budget allocation for education and earmarking of resources for women's education.

2. Incentives, financial and material, where the literacy is below 20 per cent.

3. Organisation of child care centres, and setting up of creches in the anganwadis.

4. Transport, hostel and other facilities for middle and secondary schools which are often at great distances.

5. Training and recruitment of women teachers.

6. Effective measures to remove biases against women in curricula and teacher training courses. And incorporation of women's roles and needs within the existing curriculum at the school and higher education level.

Health

That women's health conditions remain deplorable is indicated by official statistics

itself. Among the problems concerning women's health, we have identified the following:—

(a) Malnutrition caused by poverty, overwork, repeated pregnancies, low educational level and social status.

(b) Lack of access to health care services and sex differential even when facilities are available.

(c) Inadequate development of primary health care and preventive health services especially in the rural areas.

(d) Lack of maternity and child health centres.

(e) Low number of women health personnel especially in the rural areas. This has resulted in a sex ratio (934: 1000) which goes against the female population particularly in the 0-4 age group. In the urban areas more girls die per every 1000 boys in the age groups 5-9, 10-14, 15-19. Female mortality, both in the urban and rural areas, is higher throughout the decade. In cases of maternal mortality, there was an increase in the percentage of deaths due to abortion during 1975-85 from 9.7 per cent to 13.7 per cent in 1981. Deaths from haemorrhage have increased, while anaemia continues to be high among pregnant women. According to an ICMR survey 25-30 per cent of women of child bearing age and 50 per cent pregnant women suffer from anaemia.

The grim reality of such adverse health conditions is indicated by the decline in the age composition in the percentage of the population below ten years from 14.5 per cent in 1971 to 12.6 per cent in 1981.

The licence given by the government to multinational companies has resulted in their virtual domination of the drug industry. It is shocking that the government has been unable to prevent these companies from dumping drugs banned in the West in the Indian market. Pregnant women are directly affected. We suggest the following:—

1. Earmarking of more funds for Maternal and Child Health facilities and extension of such facilities to the rural areas in particular.

2. Training of traditional birth attendants or dais and para medical personnel.

3. Steps to provide drinking water and sanitation facilities in every village by the end of the plan.

4. Ban on sex based amniocentiasis and such amniocentiasis to be allowed only in medical colleges and genetic research centres.

5. An end to the liberal regulations which allow multinational companies to dump dangerous goods in India, e.g., in the drug industry which have an adverse impact on women's health.

Legal Status

Although it is true that laws alone cannot fundamentally alter the low status of women, they do form the backbone of any movement for progress. In this context, the laws pertaining to women in India are woefully inadequate if not retrograde. Although the constitution guarantees equality for women this is by no means reflected in the present laws. In their daily lives, women continue to suffer gross inequality and discrimination because of the lack of secular laws and uniform civil laws. Whatever amendments have been made so far relate to the Hindu code while Muslim, Christian laws remain intact. The different personal laws governing women have failed to give an equal status to women in the areas of marriage, property, succession maintenance, divorce, adoption. The criminal laws of the land and the laws relating to evidence also reflect the unequal status of women. Certain Acts like the Factory's Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act have failed to benefit or even cover women both in the organised and unorganised sectors. Women do not have equal rights to property and the various laws relating to succession also give women an unequal status.

Free legal aid should be provided to women by the State. The Equal Remuneration Act should be implemented alongwith the Maternity Benefit Act for women working in both the organised and unorganised sectors with the aid of deterrent punishment for their violation.

Family Court

The present Act is very inadequate; cases concerning rape, dowry etc., are not within the purview of these countries. We agree that, the effect to reconcile should form part of the family court, but in cases where relations are very strained divorce should be allowed. Many shall not benefit from this court since they are to be set up in cities with a population of one million. Many states will be thereby excluded. We recommend that, family courts be set up in every district. Also, the implementation of the family court law is yet to begin. This should

be done immediately.

We recommend:

1. Constitution of Family Court in every district.

2. All cases concerning women and children be dealt with in the Family Court.

Atrocities on Women

The general degradation of women is reflected in the horrifying increase in the brutal atrocities against them. During this decade dowry deaths and bride burning have become common place. In the capital itself on an average a woman was burnt to death every twelve hours in the year 1983. Moreover, the experience of women's organisation is that the police in most cases display a most callous indifference to such cases, if not outright collusion with the perpetrators of this atrocities. Similarly, cases of rape and sexual harassment of women have registered a huge increase. Official statistics indicate that, crimes against women were on the increase. Cases of rape increased by 63.2 per cent during 1971-77 and prostitution by 79.8 per cent. Prostitution, kidnapping, abduction, rape and molestation formed 95 per cent of the total crimes against women. A shocking aspect of these atrocities against women is that, 15 per cent of the rape committed in rural areas and 28 per cent in tribal areas in 1982 were public servants. Most of these cases go unreported, even of those reported only in 3 per cent of all cases of atrocities against women were the accused convicted.

We recommend:

Central Government Directive of 1981 regarding constitution of District Advisory Committees to be implemented. National Commission on women. Most laws passed relating to women are not implemented. There is no machinery at present to check the working of the laws, so that there is no guarantee to protection of rights enshrined in the constitution. We demand the Commission at the Centre be provided with full statutory powers to monitor all cases. In conclusion, we hope that you will give serious consideration to the above recommendations and allocate sufficient financial resources for their implementation. You will agree that the country cannot progress or go forward without the active participation and involvement of women.

Discrimination Continues

TO Smt. M. Chandrasekar, Hon. Minister for Women and Social Welfare, New Delhi: "This union (South Central Railway Employees' Union: (SCREU) is pleased to bring the following case to your honour's attention with a hope that the policies of the Government are implemented.

This union is demanding that discrimination shown against Mazdoor Women employed in Vijayawada Division of S.C. Railway be ended since a decade. There are nearly 200 Mazdoor women employed in Civil Engineering Department. All these Mazdoor women are employed since 1974 and enjoying the temporary status. The screening for absorption of casual labourers employed in Civil Engineering Department was held in 1983 and orders were issued for absorption in regular services based on seniority of these labour. Though these Mazdoor women were called for screening they were not absorbed in regular posts though these women are seniors to Mazdoormen.

The basic reason for such denial of elementary privilege for screening casual labour is due to their being women Mazdoor. When this was represented to Railway Ministry, all types of reasons are given that these women labour cannot perform the duties of Night patrol which is done by the Gangmen.

This union feels that such excuses are given just to justify their discrimination against women and the Ministry of Railways is not interested, thus acting against the pronouncements made by Hon. Prime Minister.

This union suggests that this problem can be solved by absorbing them as water women for each gang, the work is being done by Mazdoor men. This work can be entrusted to Mazdoor women and the services of Mazdoor men can be utilised for better purposes. In Vijayawada Division alone, nearly 200 Gangmen are being utilised for this light work in each gang which can be entrusted to Mazdoor Women. This union therefore appeals to you, Madam, to take up this issue with the Ministry of Railways for implementation of the policies pronounced by Hon. Prime Minister of India.

We Too are the Partners of To-Day's Progress

Implementation of Welfare Programmes has brought new dimensions to the life of millions of backward-class people.

With a view to improving the conditions of the backward classes the Left Front Government has undertaken a host of welfare schemes since it came to power in 1977. Despite financial limitations, Rs. 43.80 crores have been allotted in 1984-85 for this purpose. In addition, various departments of the Government are spending about Rs. 75 crores for different projects for their betterment.

Commendable achievements have been made in sectors like agriculture, cottage industry, fisheries, animal husbandry, education, vocational training. Under the aegis of the West Bengal Tribal Development Corporation as many as 68 multipurpose Cooperatives are active. Loans are extended at low rates of interest to start small business by the West Bengal Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development and Finance Corporation along with West Bengal Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation Ltd.

Owing to their rural backdrop the people of backward classes have been immensely benefited by the land reforms programme of the Left Front Government. A large number of recipients of the vested lands and those recorded as bargadars belong to this section. To make them self-supporting various types of financial grants are also extended. About 2,38,900 backward families received a total of Rs. 14.7 crores as financial assistance in 1983-84. Forest Acts have also been suitably amended to protect their interest. As a result, 12 lakhs of man-hour were created during 1983-84.

To extend educational facilities many new hostels, ashram hostels have been set up and children of the backward classes are provided with free books, hostel grants, clothings etc. Since the backward areas of Sunderban and Jhargram have a concentration of the weaker sections various constructive programmes have been undertaken through the Sunderban and Jhargram Development Board.

The Left Front Government firmly believes that in the future better benefits would accrue to the backward classes through more bold and dynamic programmes.

Government of West Bengal

Report from Rajasthan

Sumitra Swami

THERE were demonstration at Ganganagar, Jaipur and Udaipur in protest against the increase in Railway fare and General budget in spite of big storm on 6.4.85. The procession went through the main thoroughfare and submitted the charter of demands to the District officer. The delegation demanded an immediate withdrawal of the budget proposals which they said were in favour of big capitalist. Besides this, a demand was made that the essential commodities should be available for common people.

A public meeting was held in front of the office to explain about the outcome of the visit to the District officer. The delegation was led by Shreemati Durga Swami, and Goumati Shakya.

For the first time 500 women assembled at Udaipur to protest against the Railway and General budget on 8th April 85, and broke the cordon of police while shouting slogans, reached the station to submit the memorandum to the Station master. Women sat on the railway lines with the result, the Chetak Express had to be stopped for fifteen minutes on the lines.

JMS Delhi Report

On National Integration: In August JMS carried out a month long campaign focussing on the Punjab issue and national integration. 13 General body meetings were held in the course of this, and a central meeting of activists/members. At the general body meetings Com. Surjeet's pamphlet on Punjab was read out and discussed. A poster workshop and campaign that had been planned could not be organised because of prohibitory orders against wall postering which were in force in Delhi. During the campaign the prevalence of communal ideas and feelings was apparent.

For Amendment to the Dowry Act: In September, JMS conducted a signature campaign on the Dowry Prohibition Act Amendment in accordance with the AIDWA decision. Nearly 10000 signatures were collected from colleges, office going women and in the areas where

JMS units exist. The response to the campaign, particularly from women, students, was good.

JMS members participated in the demonstrations organised to protest against the unconstitutional act of the Andhra Pradesh Governor in the dismissal of the NTR ministry. Women courted arrest on three occasions on this issue.

Apart from the central programme, two area programmes were held in the months of August and September. The first was in Azadpur in North Delhi, where an elected councillor misbehaved and manhandled members of a JMS delegation that had gone to represent on certain civic problems. Our Joint Secretary Asha Lata, who was leading the delegation was also manhandled. Subsequently, a complaint was lodged in the police station against the Councillor and a demonstration taken out in the concerned constituency with an effigy of the Councillor. This had a tremendous impact and attempts by Cong-I women to provoke a fight and take out a counter-demonstration were unsuccessful.

In Nandnagari a trans-Jamna resettlement colony, we pursued reports of a rape incident in a police station. The victims family was contacted and a huge demonstration organised outside the police station. The police was compelled to institute an enquiry and take action.

At the end of November, a mass deputation of sikh women widowed in the November riots led by JMS, met the Lt. Governor of Delhi to press for urgent measures regarding security, housing, widow's pension and rehabilitation schemes, free education to children from these families, and to demand a cell to monitor relief and rehabilitation work. The Lt. Governor promised to actively consider the demands. A delegation of JMS office-bearers again met him at the end of December to press for implementation of decisions announced. In many cases through the relief work JMS has been able to draw the affected women into our organisation and maintain regular contact with them.

International Women's Day. This year JMS decided to celebrate 8th March independently and to use the occasion to educate our members about the history and significance of this day. General body meetings were held in most units in preparation for International Women's Day celebrations. We also sold 2,700 badges made specifically to mark March 8. Despite thin attendance in colleges due to Holi, the

response of college students was enthusiastic. On March 8 itself, a meeting was held at constitution club. Apart from speeches highlighting the history and perspective of the women's movement, there were poems and songs depicting women's oppression and struggle. A slide show on Women in Nicaragua was organised, along with posters on women's struggles in different countries.

Women Renew its Pledge on 27th April to Relentlessly struggle Against Congress Vandalism & Atrocities on Women

(West Bengal)

27th April is a memorable day in the history of democratic movement of West Bengal. It was on this day in 1949 a huge procession was taken out by the women from Bharat Sabha Hall demanding immediate release of Political prisoners. At the junction of college street & Bowbazar the Congress State Government police opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators killing Latika Sen, Pratibha Ganguly, Amiya Dutta, Gita Sarkar and Biman Banerjee. Every year this day is observed in West Bengal by the left democratic Women's Organisation to pay respectful homage to these martyrs.

This year, on this day, a martyrs Column was dedicated in their memory at the College Street — Bowbazar Crossing which was inaugurated by the West Bengal Left front Committee, Chairman Com. Saroj Mukherjee.

The others to place wreath on the martyr's column included Kanak Mukherjee President, Ganatantrik Mahila Samity and its General Secretary Com. Shyamali Gupta, Anila Devi, Madhuri Dasgupta, Lakshmi De MLA, Gita Mukherjee M.P., Dr. Ranen Sen, Kishore Maitreya Sen (grand son of Latika Sen) Prabha Chatterjee, Gita Sen and the leaders of various other organisations.

A book titled "27 April" in memory of the 27 April Martyr's brought out by West Bengal Ganatantrik Mahila Samity was released by Left Front Chairman, Saroj Mukherjee. Paying homage to the martyrs Com. Saroj Mukherjee said that the people had earned independence after a lot of sacrifice and even then after independence when the people wanted release of their near and dear ones, the Congress Government of West Bengal led by Dr. B.C.

Roy in a most barbaric way opened fire brutally killing five of them. The people of West Bengal could not tolerate this act of vandalism and hence to day the left front is in power. Today, to protect this people's Government and ensure defeat of the authoritarian Congress regime is the most important task of the people. Let us once again renew this pledge.

He said that the people of this state under the guidance and leadership of the left front has been relentlessly waging struggle against the misrule of the Congress Government and women have also been a part and parcel of these movement and to carry forward these struggles would be the best way to pay tribute to these martyrs.

Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha leader Geeta Sen said the Sacrifices made by these martyrs will never go in vain. The others to speak on this occasion were Gita Mukherjee, Madhuri Das gupta, Shyamali Gupta etc.

Hostel for Muslim Girl Students in West Bengal

The Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu laid the foundation stone of a hostel for muslim girl students near Park Circus Tram Depot on February 6 last. The hostel, the first of its kind in the State, will be built at an estimated cost of Rs. 33 lakhs with the accommodation of 200 girl student. The Board of "Wakfs" of West Bengal which will manage the hostel, will provide Rs. 5 lakhs as initial expenditure for the construction. The Chief Minister in his address assured that specific problems of the Minority Communities in the State would be looked into by his Government.

Women's International Democratic Federation

April 1985

Open Letter to the Women of the Whole World

ON the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the victory over Hitlerite fascism, 8th-9th May 1985.

Dear Friends,

Together with all those who stand for peace and international understanding, for social progress and human dignity, millions of women on all continents will celebrate in 1985 the 40th anniversary of the victory of anti-Hitler coalition over German fascism and Japanese militarism and the liberation of the peoples from fascist barbarity.

The main force in the anti-Hitler coalition was the Soviet Union, the Soviet people and their army. With great heroism and immense sacrifices they stopped the aggression and liberated Europe from fascist tyranny and enslavement and saved the world civilization.

This victory was also the attainment of what had been fought for by a unique movement of peoples and states, uniting the most widely differing social and political forces of resistance and liberation. Countless women and girls from many countries courageously joined its ranks, many giving their lives.

They were all inspired by the victories of the Red Army, by the self-sacrificing dedication of an entire people in the struggle against the fascist intruders.

As a result of this victory there was a great upsurge of the forces of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.

Tremendous historical changes have taken place in the world in the peoples' struggle against the most aggressive and most reactionary circles of imperialism, which has never abandoned its goal of reversing the results of World War II and postwar developments. The Socialist world system emerged and was consolidated, the imperialist colonial system collapsed, in different countries fascist and dictatorial regimes were swept away and an unprecedented movement of the peoples for peace and disarmament developed.

For the WIDF, whose founders included women from the anti-fascist resistance, the 40th anniversary of the victory over fascism is an occasion to remember the heroines who died

in the struggle against fascism and war. Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya of the USSR, Anne Frank of the Netherlands, Elektra Apostolu of Greece, Jozka Jaburlova of Czechoslovakia and Liselotte Herrmann of Germany stand for the many who gave their lives so that we might live. They have not been forgotten. They live on in the deeds of the present generation.

The aim that they as well as the survivors of the resistance struggle and the activists of the first post-war years set themselves, never to permit the return of war and fascism, now guides millions and millions of women on all continents in their struggle to prevent a nuclear holocaust.

Dear Friends,

The main lesson of World War II and the cause inherited from the antifascists is now more urgent than ever: to bring together all the forces that see their main task in opposing the US imperialist drive for world domination in the different regions of the world and preventing the nuclear destruction of life on earth.

Ever more efforts should be made to increase activities together with all peace-loving men and women to thwart the US and NATO plans of unleashing another world conflagration, this time a nuclear one.

The WIDF and the national organisations affiliated to it welcome the commencement of new negotiations between the USSR and the USA on the whole range of nuclear weapons. We express the hope that a realistic, serious and constructive approach will predominate in these negotiations, the principle of equality and equal security will be strictly observed, and the arms race will not be permitted to start in space and will be ended on earth.

We highly appreciate the determination of the USSR to negotiate on that basis. At the same time we express our deep concern over the fact that the US Administration is engaging in acts that are at variance with the agreement on the basis of negotiations. It is increasing its preparation of "star war" which is a part of the first nuclear strike strategy of the USA, linked with further deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Western Europe and the stepping up of the production of strategic MX missiles.

We must not and will not allow the most aggressive forces of imperialism and especially of the USA and NATO to jeopardize superiority over the Soviet Union. We want to live. All of us, all peoples have a right to live in peace. That is what we are fighting for. Life will triumph if we all want it to.

Sd/-	Sd/-
Mirjam Vire-Tuominen	Freda Brown
General Secretary	President

MESSAGE

—to the Soviet Women's Committee
—to the Soviet Women
Dear Friends,

TOGETHER with you, we and all peace-loving men and women in the world will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the historic victory over Hitlerite fascism and Japanese militarism on 8 and 9 May this year.

It was the glorious Red Army, the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the men and women, sons and daughters of the young Soviet State who defended their homeland and made the decisive contribution within the anti-Hitler coalition to the liberation of the peoples of Europe from fascist barbarity, this creating all the preconditions for forcing Japanese militarism to surrender unconditionally, which put an end to the Second World War.

Their deeds and their courage became a symbol and an example for the armies of the anti-Hitler coalition and for the entire resistance movement in all countries. They gave hope and strength even to those who were defending human dignity and justice in the hells of the fascist concentration camps and prisons. Twenty million Soviet citizens gave their lives for victory, they gave their lives so that we might live.

It is our ideal and our obligation to honour their legacy.

Dear women and mothers of the great Soviet land, you who took an active part in the Great October Socialist Revolution, you who participated in building the new socialist Revolution, you who participated in building the new socialist society as free and equal citizens, you contributed decisively, with

exemplary courage, with all your strength, at the price of untold hardships and sacrifices, to halting and defeating the fascist invaders and their plans for world domination.

Once victory was won, despite the devastation of your country, despite the wounds the war had inflicted, despite your own privation, you immediately extended active solidarity to the women and children of the peoples fighting for their national and social liberation, and they have had your never-failing support ever since.

Basically it is thanks to the Soviet Union that peace in Europe, for which much a high price was paid, has now lasted for forty years. Soviet women have made a great contribution to it. You participate in implementing the constructive and persistent peace policy of your government.

In all these years the women and girls of your country, on equal terms with the men, have contributed with their knowledge and skills to making the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a powerful bastion of peace.

These forty years of peace in Europe have seen great efforts and activities of the Soviet Women's Committees to promote and consolidate the friendship and co-operation of the women of all countries. You have most strongly promoted the development of a broad alliance of all women and women's organizations that work for peace and for prevention of a nuclear holocaust.

The Soviet women were among the co-founders of the Women's International Democratic Federation on 1 December 1945 in Paris.

It is a source of pride and confidence for us that you, dear friends, play such an active role in our great community of women's organisations in 117 countries and that you selflessly pass on your rich experiences in the struggle for the rights of women, in the struggle against war and fascism, for peace and peaceful co-existence, for national and social liberation.

Now as then you give all peace-loving women strength and confidence and are an example in the struggle for a lasting peace and to ban war from the life of the peoples for all time.

Dear friends,

The consistent peace policy of the Soviet Union led to the new negotiations between the

USSR and the USA in Geneva on the whole complex of nuclear and space weapons.

On all continents, more and more women are coming to realize that their own active contribution is needed to force the USA to engage in honest negotiations in strict compliance with the principle of equality and equal security with the purpose of achieving results in the interest of peace.

Under the present circumstances this calls for intensified struggle by all peace-loving forces against the nuclear arms mania, for the prevention of the militarization of outer space and for a halt to the deployment of US first-strike nuclear weapons in Western Europe and the withdrawal of those already deployed.

The most important lesson we have drawn from World War II is to prevent war before it breaks out.

This means bringing together all the forces that are interested in peace and the continued existence of humanity.

(Contd. from page 2)

Stalin, gave a clarion call to defend the land, inch by inch, and they did defend sacrificing millions of lives of men and women.

Fourty years ago, on May 8th 1945, in a small suburb of Berlin, Nazi Germany's military command signed the unconditional surrender and the Third Reich ceased to exist. The whole course of history changed after the defeat of the Hitler and Europe became free from the Fascist regime once for all.

Every year on May 9th at 6.50 p.m. men and women stand with a pin drop silence all over Soviet Union to pay tributes to those unknown soldiers of the Red Army, they stand in memory of those sons and daughters, friends and comrades who fell for the cause of their country. They bow their heads to those 12 million defenceless civilians old people and children perished in the Nazi concentration camps, prisons and gas chambers. They demand to bring the culprit to book and punish. Today even after 40 years of the second World War, the horrible crimes

In this struggle the WIDF and the national organizations affiliated to it play an important role and bear a great responsibility. Together we have the possibility and the strength to stay the hand of the warmongers before it is too late.

We are proud, dear Soviet friends, to be able to count such an experienced and battle-tried organization as the Soviet Women's Committee among our most active members and most powerful supporters in the struggle for humanity's most valuable asset, peace, for disarmament, for the rights of women and children, for national independence and social progress.

Dear friends,

We wish you every success in carrying out the policy for the benefit of the Soviet people and for the safeguarding of peace.

Mirjam Vire-Tuominen
General Secretary
Berlin, March 1985

Affectionately yours,
sd/-
Freda Brown
President

against the mankind by Hitler have not been forgotten by the people.

Today all over the world, the people are observing the 40th anniversary of the victory over Fascism. They do remember that because of the victory by the Red Army, the whole mankind was saved from the Fascist rule, liberating Europe and inspired the National liberation movement in other countries, paving their way for Socialism.

Women in our country can not forget for a moment the experience of the patriotic war, when the war clouds are again gathering on our horizon and elsewhere, when USA is threatening to destroy the peaceful world with Nuclear weapons, the main target being Soviet Union and the Socialist system. The women, including our women are today launching struggles against the imperialist policies of Reagan Ministry raising the only slogan "No Bombs" and for "Peace". A firm No to Nuclear War is the battle-cry of women all over the world.