

APPENDIX

CUBAN WOMEN: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION*

Introduction

Cuban women have always been characterized by their revolutionary attitude. The heroic tradition of struggle of the women Mambi fighters against Spanish colonial rule in the last century was maintained throughout the sad years of the compromised Republic in each battle to break the chains and put an end to the opprobrium in which the nation was sinking. Beautiful pages in our history have been written in all eras by courageous daughters of this people who, as members of the fighting vanguard, took an active part in the underground struggle, joined the guerrilla forces in the mountains, served in the important networks that cooperated with the revolutionary forces and carried out many other tasks that supported the resistance.

When the rebel troops raised the flags of freedom throughout Cuba's national territory for good, the women put all their efforts and growing enthusiasm and patriotic fervor into creating the marvelous future that the Revolution guaranteed.

On January 1, 1959, the doors of a new life were opened to our people. The thoroughgoing economic, political and social changes that were wrought put an end to imperialist exploitation, dependence, oppression and control, laying the bases for equality among all citizens who, from then on, would be the protagonists in and beneficiaries of the important process which was just beginning.

How much the Revolution has meant for women who, for the first time in our history, in a free and sovereign homeland, as part of the people, began to exercise the inalienable rights of all human beings! With firmness and patriotism, women began to make themselves felt and, through tireless work and courage that has passed every test, showed how very important their participation was.

Women, who could take up a gun, march to the battle front and carry out any task, took on their full stature. They began to be fully appreciated by society, and their advance along the paths of equality was accelerated as they made their contribution to the construction of socialism.

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During the attack on Playa Giron (the Bay of Pigs), in the struggle against bands of counterrevolutionaries during the October Missile Crisis, in response to every imperialist act of aggression and in each of the tasks of socialist construction, they have shown the courage and deep convictions which are typical of the women in our country.

Along with the enthusiasm and revolutionary passion that have characterized our women right from the start, they have shown their political awareness, which has grown ever more solid in the course of the past 25 years. An avalanche of women breaking with traditional limitations and prejudices tackled the critical situations that arose in the early years of the Revolution, carrying out all of the tasks assigned to them. Every year members of the younger generation of the Revolution joined women who offered the fruits of their training to socialist construction. The self-sacrificing nature of those who, replacing men in voluntary work, took up plows or did factory work, made the initial advance of revolutionary work possible. Their attitude helped to lay exemplary bases for obtaining this powerful mass of women workers, young technicians, professionals, scientists, intellectuals, students, farm women and housewives who carried out each and every one of the tasks that were required for the construction of socialism — and did so with love and dedication. Women's presence in the ranks of internationalist cooperation personnel and their massive participation in defense through the Territorial Troop Militias (MTT), Civil Defense (DC), the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) and the Ministry of the Interior (MININT), ready to defend our homeland if attacked, is a true expression of this ideological firmness.

The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), an instrument created by the Revolution to promote one of its basic goals — women's full equality — was a decisive factor in this process of incorporation; in the raising of women's cultural, political and ideological levels; and in the creation of the objective and subjective conditions for enabling them to participate more and more in all aspects of national life.

*Women's Incorporation In Socially Useful Work: A Basic Step In
The Battle For Equality*

One of the very important achievements of the past 25 years of the Revolution was the massive incorporation of women in our country's economic life. Whereas, in 1958, only about 194,000 women workers were registered, including tens of thousands of domestics and others in unskilled jobs, now more than a million women are part of the active work force.

Women's participation in socially useful work, a prerequisite for the attainment of equality, constitutes a decisive contribution to the national economy and means the full exercise of a right of every member of our

population and one of the most important achievements of the proletariat. At the same time, it permits the development of all women's potentials, which has a very positive influence on the family and society.

The systematic incorporation of hundreds of thousands of women in the various production fronts has met a need of the Revolution, which urgently required all of its forces for advancing in the battle against underdevelopment.

In the first few years, while this process was just beginning, an appeal was made to women, and they responded unhesitatingly, joining in agricultural plans, training courses, agricultural work and many other tasks.

Voluntary work, which was a tremendous experience for women, had contributed effectively to forming new concepts in the minds of all, men and women alike, thus giving women the opportunity to join in work and the satisfaction of making their economic contribution to society. Such work enabled them and all the people to gain confidence in women's capabilities while showing the importance of and need for using this work force, which had been held in check for so long.

Their incorporation, efficiency in the work process, cooperation in the work group, and participation in trade union activities professional training have made it possible for them to make permanent advances in their cultural, technical and ideological development.

The success of our Party's policy as regards the promotion of women's incorporation in work is shown by the quantitative and qualitative advances made.

Number of women workers

	2nd Congress	3rd Congress	4th Congress
<u>1950</u>	<u>(1974)</u>	<u>(1980)</u>	<u>(until April 1984)</u>
194,000	604,589	843,155	1,083,300

As may be seen, the number of women workers has nearly sextupled. Moreover, women are now working in sectors that had been closed to them under capitalism, such as construction, transportation and cattle raising. The fact that 53.9 percent of all technicians are women (around a third of the women workers, including more than 300,000 doctors, engineers, teachers and nurses) is a noteworthy achievement. Many women have done outstanding work in research, winning prestige as scientists or joining the Movement of Innovators and Rationalizers.

This doesn't mean that women have already attained the levels of participation and technical training to which the Revolution aspires, however, for there are branches and specialties in which more women could

be employed. The courses for training skilled workers and intermediate-level technicians offer many diverse opportunities and there is a great demand for their graduates.

At present, 242,000 women are listed in the occupational category of workers, and the opportunities women have for skilled or unskilled work directly linked to production are constantly growing, both because of the opportunities offered in the training courses in the various specialities that need this valuable work force, and the possibilities that the graduates have for finding work that is appropriate for their training.

Socialist Legislation On Women

Laws are not a dead letter in present-day Cuba, and the revolution has promulgated new laws, legislative decrees, resolutions and other norms to guarantee equality.

The Constitution of the Republic proclaims that "All citizens have equal rights and equal duties" and states that discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex or national origin is proscribed and punishable by law.

The Family Code promulgates the equality of husband and wife in terms of their responsibilities to their children, family and home.

Legal provisions were adopted, such as the maternity law, that have given working women and their children great benefits. The Work Protection and Hygiene law and the Social Security law, establish special obligations in view of the workers' needs — especially those of women. These cover such aspects as job changes for pregnant women, if the doctor says this is advisable, and the fact that certain jobs are placed off limits for pregnant women because they are considered harmful to the baby.

The law guarantees equal pay for equal work for men and women, a month of paid vacation for every eleven months worked and women's retirement at age 55. The Social Security and Welfare System provide workers and their families with state protection.

This legal base has served to promote the important achievements that women have attained in the various spheres of revolutionary activities, but we should continue analyzing aspects of its application in order to adjust them to present conditions.

The FMC is making a study of legislation related to women, and, after consulting with the agencies involved, it will submit some specific proposals to the Party that will help to solve present problems. These include difficulties related to food and other allowances.

The System of Direct Contracting and the organization of Work and Wages were established to ensure a rational use of labor resources, raise productivity and increase savings. When it comes to selecting personnel, some work places don't act with complete justice and impartiality, for

there is resistance to and insensitivity concerning women's requests to fill vacant jobs. Their conditions and needs are not always taken into consideration. This is especially unjust in the case of a woman who is the head of her family.

Sometimes administrations use narrow reasoning, saying that they don't want women workers because taking them on could result in greater justified absences for maternity and family-related difficulties.

Luckily fewer and fewer administrators act this way as seen by the permanence achieved by women workers, but we must combat such manifestations which, on occasion, make it difficult for women to get work. In many cases, their absences are inevitable — for leave prior to and following birth, or the prolongation of their maternity leave to take care of the baby.

Women also miss work to take care of members of the family who are sick. Traditionally, women have had to bear the brunt of this task. The question arises: Is it absolutely necessary that women must always take time off to care for the sick? Many men, perfectly correctly, claim the right to take care of their wives, mothers or children who are hospitalized, but it sometimes happens that a woman whose professional work is of key importance to society finds it necessary to ask for leave to take care of a sick relative when her husband or other male member of the family, whose work is not of equal importance, could take care of the invalid.

What logic is there for the fact that women may stay in men's wards in the hospital to help care for relatives, but men can't do the same in women's wards? We must reflect deeply about these needs, which the families of workers should share. In view of the importance of this topic, we recommend that an evaluation be made of the possibility of allowing both men and women to care for relatives who are hospitalized in both men's and women's wards. In this regard, we should remember that sometimes women themselves don't accept men's participation in these tasks. Such concepts from the past should be changed.

In the vast majority of cases, these problems are what cause women's absences from work. The administration in each work place is legally authorized to give any worker (man or woman) who needs it, leave to take care of "personal matters" when the need is justified.

In this regard, we should promote a rational use of the possibilities provided by the law so that, in granting leave, the needs of the family and of society are weighed. Thus, leave should be granted to the sick person's relative whose absence from his job will have the least adverse effects for society. Naturally, all this means that ideological work should be strengthened, since men's absences from work for these reasons are not yet understood in many places.

According to our laws, the administration in each work place may

grant unpaid leave for whatever time it feels correct after evaluating the problem that the worker (man or woman) has and deciding that the economic activity which the worker carries out permits such a leave.

The legislation that complements Legislative Decree 40, of 1980, referring to work contracts — specifically, Resolution 773, of 1981 — authorizes the administration of any work place to assign work contracts for work of a permanent nature when it involves replacing personnel who are absent for any of several reasons (listed in the resolution), including legitimately authorized absences.

From this it may be deduced that a male worker who has difficulties in caring for his children or parents and who prefers to assume this responsibility, because the family's income would suffer more if his wife took leave because her wage is higher than his, or because her work is more complex and important and she can't take leave at a given time, can obtain an unpaid leave authorized by the administration at his work place if the administration is agreeable. The administration may also hire someone on a temporary basis to do his work.

Certainly, in those work places where all or most of the workers are women, an analysis should be made of the advisability of hiring a certain percentage of additional permanent personnel to cover for workers who are absent for maternity and other justified reasons. The experience gained in this regard has shown that, if this is done in a rational, controlled way, full coverage of jobs can be guaranteed, excess work by the rest of the group is avoided and all substitutes are guaranteed the same work time as the rest of the workers.

In education, ten percent more teachers are hired at all levels of pre-school, primary and secondary education and are on the staff lists at the municipal level. In the case of the nursery schools, because of the level of constant attention that children of that age require, 10.4 percent more people are on the staff. Good use is made of these substitutes and sometimes even more are needed.

There have been cases of women being kept out of nontraditional jobs — such as masons, tile setters, electricians, carpenters, plumbers and mechanics. Contrary to the principles of the Revolution, women who have graduated as technicians in highway construction, mechanics, etc., sometimes aren't given jobs because the administration claims that this isn't work for women.

It sometimes happens that criteria based on outmoded ideas and prejudices lead to the unjust application of administrative measures against women. There have been cases of an administration unjustly applying the provisions of Decree 32 against women and firing them because the administration wanted to get rid of women workers who had difficulties of a personal nature, or who had sick relatives or small children. These acts of discrimination, which constitute flagrant cases of in-

justice, must be immediately denounced and energetically combated until an appropriate solution is found for each case.

The joint efforts made by the FMC and the labor movement should be strengthened, placing particular attention on the meetings of workers from the various unions, the agencies of which should render an account of their efforts to promote women's participation.

Likewise, we must also intensify the legal education of women, so they know their rights, what they should do to exercise them, where to go and the time limits for presenting complaints.

In order to see to it that the policy of incorporating women in work is applied correctly and to propose measures that promote their professional training and advancement, Commissions for Coordinating Women's Employment have been created throughout the country, composed of members of the FMC, the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC) and the State Committee for Labor and Social Security.

Work is now being done to strengthen these Commissions. They should function systematically so they may play their proper role in all the municipalities and provinces in the country.

It is absolutely necessary for the FMC to be a much more active element in the Commissions, that it refer to them each case of discrimination of which it learns and that it do whatever is necessary to solve each case. Each of the components of these Commissions should evaluate each situation that arises and see to it that justice is done.

The errors and arbitrary decisions that are made must be rectified, even if they involve only one case. There is no room for discrimination in our society, and those who act against the revolutionary laws should be punished.

Promotion To Leadership Positions

In the 15th Congress of the Central Organization of Cuban trade Unions, which was held in February 1984, our Commander in Chief referred to the important achievements scored by women in work, study and professional training. He also brought out the women's positive response to many revolutionary activities, including defense.

"Since these facts are so evident and unquestionable," he said, "why aren't there more women in leadership posts in the Party, the state and the mass organizations? That would be only logical — not a caprice or a mere slogan. But, even so, there is no doubt that we are advancing in this regard."

The promotion of women to leadership posts at all levels is conclusive proof of the consistent, effective application of the policy of equal rights and opportunities. Now, let us analyze the current data on this aspect.

There is a low index of women in positions of responsibility in the state administration, something that is a special cause for concern in those sectors that have a lot of women in the work force. Of course, the present percentages are encouraging if we compare them with the figures for 20 years ago.

In line with the information given by the State Committee for Statistics the figures on women in leadership posts in the various sectors of the economy on December 31, 1982, were as follows:

Figure 2
Women in Leadership Posts

	<u>% of workers who are women</u>	<u>% of leaders who are women</u>
TOTAL	35.1	22.6
<u>Productive sphere</u>		
Industry	29.0	11.3
Construction	11.2	6.2
Agriculture	19.4	3.6
Forestry	15.1	4.7
Transportation	16.3	6.8
Communications	44.3	36.8
Commerce	44.9	28.6
Other productive activities	49.0	30.1
<u>Nonproductive sphere</u>		
Communal and personal services	40.4	29.4
Science and technology	47.6	25.5
Education	66.1	47.7
Culture and art	41.2	37.0
Public health, social security, sports and tourism	68.9	39.0
Finances and insurance	65.5	43.5
Administration	42.8	19.6

Other nonproduc- tive activities	44.8	31.1
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In all the central state agencies — Ministries, State Committees and National Institutes — according to the information provided by the Commissions for Coordinating Women's Employment, the figures on women in administrative leadership posts are as follows:

Figure 3
Women in Administrative Leadership Posts

<u>Leadership level</u>	<u>% of leaders who are women</u>
Ministers or Presidents	4.3
Deputy ministers or vice presidents	3.4
Directors	10.3
Assistant directors	12.6
Department heads	17.7
Section heads	12.8
Managers	29.3
Assistant managers	40.5
Administrators	41.3
Assistant administrators	15.2
Delegates	7.6
Assistant delegates	13.7
Rectors	32.2
Deputy rectors	5.4
Deans	11.3
Assistant deans	19.7
Other leadership posts	39.3

Figure 4
Women Leaders of Select Central Agencies

	<u>% of leaders who are women</u>
National Bank of Cuba	43.8
Ministry of Education	36.1
Ministry of Public Health	35.2
Ministry of Communications	35.4
Ministry of Foreign Trade	30.0

Cuban Institute of Radio and Television	28.0
Ministry of Culture	27.9
State Committee for Standardization	27.2
State Committee for Labor and Social Security	27.2
State Committee for Statistics	26.7
Central Planning Board (JUCEPLAN)	26.7
State Committee for Economic Cooperation	26.0
Ministry of Higher Education	26.0
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	24.5
Ministry of Light Industry	24.0
National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation	22.4
National Institute of Tourism	20.4
State Committee of Prices	20.0
Ministry of Domestic Trade	17.9
State Committee for Finances	15.3
State Committee for Technical and Material Supply	14.9
Ministry of the Food Industry	11.9
Ministry of Transportation	6.7
Ministry of Construction	6.7
Ministry of the Fishing Industry	5.4

I should point out that the fact that 43.8 percent of the leaders of the National Bank of Cuba are women was achieved as the result of a special effort to promote them. This has been the policy of that agency, which gives its women workers who have been there the longest and have the most experience an opportunity to advance. Some other central agencies have begun to make similar efforts.

In terms of the labor movement, the fact that 45.8 percent of the leaders in the trade union sections and 38.2 percent of the leaders of the bureaus in the various work places are women is encouraging, for it shows the confidence that the masses of the workers have in women, recognizing the prestige they have won. At the intermediate and higher levels, however, the percent of women leaders drops considerably. If we average the data on the leaders of the municipal CTCs and those of the trade union at that level, only 15.7 percent of their leaders are women; at the provincial level, only 14.7 percent of the leaders are women; and, at the national level, 17.7 percent. If we analyze the figures on women lead-

ers at the bureau level in the CTC and its trade unions, we see that they are lower.

The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) has figures that are more proportional to the percent of its members who are women, for women constitute 15 percent of its members, 11 percent of the members of its leadership boards, 18 percent of the members of its municipal committees, 16 percent of the members of its provincial committees and 11 percent of its leaders on a nationwide basis.

The Union of Young Communists (UJC) has made considerable progress in this regard, as may be seen if we compare present data with those which we quoted in our 2nd Congress, but we believe that more could be done to promote the women in this organization, whose members are young people who have grown with and been molded by the Revolution, with equal opportunities. We are sure that these indexes will increase in line with present realities and future prospects.

The figures for the student organizations not only show the results of 25 years of the Revolution in its correct practice of equality but also testify to the strength of women. In the Jose Marti Pioneers' Organization (OPJM), 50.4 percent of the members are girls, as are 82.5 percent of the national vanguards. Young women constitute 57.7 percent of the members of the Federation of Senior High Schools Students (FEEM), 57.3 percent of the national vanguards and 56.1 percent of its leaders, as an average, with high figures at the higher levels. In the Federation of University Students (FEU), 59.1 percent of its members are women, as are 55.2 percent of the national vanguards and 49.8 percent of its leaders.

Causes for the vestiges of inequality

Both in terms of access to and permanence in employment, and as regards promotion, two main factors influence the manifestations of inequality: criteria that do not evaluate women at their full worth, and erroneous concepts of protection or paternalism when it comes to evaluating what they can do.

Archaic, deeply unjust concepts still exist in quite a few homes which assign women all the housework (which should be shared by all the members of the family) plus the care of the children (a responsibility of both father and mother). Both men and women are to blame for the continuation of these misconceptions and customs. Mothers have the biological function of giving birth and nursing babies, but the father and mother are equally responsible for bringing their children up.

As for housework, these tasks aren't just for women alone. At one time in history, women had to assume them because the men had to support their families outside the home, but this division of labor does not corre-

spond to this era and accord with present reality because of the changes that have been wrought by the Revolution. Now women who are aware of their social responsibilities participate in all the tasks of the construction of a new life, therefore, in those homes in which this system is maintained, either because of the woman's weakness or for lack of consideration and because the rest of the members of the family find it easier not to do their duty, a profound injustice is being committed. And this injustice generates others.

Moreover, this extra burden that falls on women in the cases we are analyzing sets a very bad example for the new generations, transmitting ideas, values and habits that are contrary to those postulated by the Revolution. In addition, going deeper in our analysis, we see that this extra burden constitutes an injustice which generates many others, for example:

It sometimes happens that, on analyzing the possibilities for promoting a woman comrade who has the ability to fill a leadership post, the aspects considered include the difficult situation she will have because she has children and other family members to care for. In some cases, the woman in question isn't even asked what she thinks. But it wouldn't occur to anybody to use the same reason to question a man's filling such a position.

It also happens that some women set limits on themselves and don't accept leadership posts out of fear that they can't take on new responsibilities, because they're overburdened with a second work load — their housework, since their families aren't conscientious about all pitching in. The same situations influence the phenomenon of less participation that has been analyzed by the leaders of People's Power at the various levels and is of great concern to the party and the FMC.

Even though, in the last election, 11.5 percent of the delegates elected in the various election districts were women — which constitutes an increase of nearly 4 percent (only 7.9 percent of the delegates in the preceding election were women)—it is also true that, when it comes to choosing between a man and woman, most of the voters (men and women alike) choose the man — not because they have any doubts about the woman's merits and ability, but simply because they suppose that the man will have enough time to carry out his duties as a delegate and that the woman will not.

"Help" or Share?

To a large extent, marital happiness and the success of a marriage depend on the correct attitude of sharing in the "for better" and "for worse" of which people have spoken since the days of our grandparents. In this case, the couple share the housework, just as they share all the

tasks with which they are presented in building and defending our socialist homeland. It isn't that the husband "helps" his wife in doing these activities, since each has an equal responsibility for this work, as in bringing up and caring for their children. Quite a few marital failures are initiated with erroneous concepts in this regard.

It is of fundamental importance to keep working to create an awareness of the need for the members of the family to act in accord with the principles of equality.

It is absolutely necessary to increase ideological work aimed at freeing woman comrades from having their abilities and possibilities for filling leadership posts limited; we must energetically combat every manifestation of discrimination or favoritism related to the promotion of women.

In some cases, men and women are analyzed differently when it comes to evaluating them for taking on responsibility, and sometimes this goes so far as to consider as prerequisites for women some aspects which aren't even mentioned in the requirements for men — as, for example, including under "moral attitude" their sex life, which is not considered in the case of men.

When it comes to evaluating a woman for possible promotion, we must fight to prevent the establishment of demands that are not included in the prerequisites or that are not made of men.

Law and ability

We don't want to promote women to posts of responsibility just to increase the figures on women's promotion; rather, we want to see to it that those women who are being developed as cadres and who have the characteristics for being promoted aren't passed over in order to give men preference but are analyzed on an equal footing, keeping in mind their capacities and knowledge.

The general experience that has been gained of women serving as leaders, both in state administration and in the political, social and mass organization, shows that they have organizational talent, good sense on the practical matters of daily life, and unquestionable energy for making decisions.

The need to do away with the concept of bourgeois morality that still persists!

As may be seen from what we have just said, some outmoded concepts still flourish, with the use of different scales for evaluating a man or a woman to carry out the same responsibilities. Bourgeois prejudices still persist in those who use one moral standard for men and another for women.

As a result of the analyses made in the theses and resolutions of the 1st and 2nd Congresses of the Party and of the consistent work that has been done since then, favorable qualitative changes are gradually being wrought in men's and women's attitudes regarding "moral problems." As I have said, obsolete criteria still have considerable influence among many people, causing them to judge the same action by men and women in different ways, seeking to apply a different standard for each sex.

There have also been cases of someone seeking to use equality to justify conduct that expresses lack of honesty, falseness and superficiality in the couple's relations, applying degrading concepts on the right of men and women to cheat and engage in sexual licentiousness, which simply means trying to justify corruption. It isn't a matter of descending to reprehensible attitudes; rather, it is one of elevating the couple's relations in all aspects of life, including sex, to the fairest, most beautiful values, befitting full human dignity.

The family and equality

The new economic and social relations which socialism generates also call for new forms of the family's organization. Certainly, in a socialist country the interests and prospects of the family and of society are closely linked and condition each other. Everything that helps society to advance redounds to the benefit of the family, and everything that contributes to the family's well-being helps to strengthen society.

The development of the personality of each of the family members and mutual respect among them are fundamental principles in the Cuban families which are being developed. I have already referred to the fact that, as a result of criteria that prevailed for hundreds of years, the mother has been the main and sometimes the only one responsible for bringing up and caring for the children, and that it is still necessary to insist on the joint responsibility of father and mother.

The moral and revolutionary duties which men and women contract when they decide to have a family should be fulfilled under all circumstances — especially when the couple decides to separate, for it often happens that one or both parents, disregarding these duties, cause emotional upsets in the children and young people — upsets that have a very negative influence on the development of their personality. On many occasions, in cases of divorce, the parent with whom the children are not living even fails to give the other a stipend for their upkeep.

For these reasons, too, I reiterate that it is absolutely necessary to continue working to educate men and women to shoulder responsibly all the duties involved in being fathers and mothers — duties which cannot be delegated.

The application of the family education plan adopted in the 2nd Con-

gress of the FMC and the 1st Congress of our Party — a plan which our organization has applied together with the Union of Young Communists; the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), the Ministries of Education and Public Health, and the Sex Education group attached to the national Assembly of People's Power's Commission on Childhood, Youth and Equal Rights for Women — has given us some valuable experience in this regard.

The Sex Education Group has used the mass media, published books and pamphlets, sent advisers to help with courses for teachers, health personnel and officials of the Union of Young Communists, held seminars and talks, and used other means to carry out its program of information and guidance on human sexuality from the biological, psychological and social points of view. At the same time, it has engaged in systematic work to educate parents, teachers, children, young people and all other members of society so that they know and endorse appropriate concepts on the relations of a couple and the role of each of its members, with equal rights and duties.

Many adolescents have their first sex relations at a very early age, completely irresponsibly, because they lack knowledge about the process of human reproduction and the possibilities for avoiding conception. As a result, they take as a game what should be the result of a decision that has been weighed and a commitment to shared love.

From the medical point of view, pregnancy during adolescence is a very serious problem for our society, and it is also a problem for individual and social development. The birth of an unwanted child constitutes a burden for the family and for society and implies a risk of the child's inappropriate development. Every child that is born as the result of irresponsible, involuntary action by its parents implies a high risk for all of society. Every child has a right to be born in conditions of affection, love and appropriate attention, which can only be provided by parents who have attained a minimum level of maturity and can therefore devote themselves to parenthood, which is an important function in our society. An untimely pregnancy causes great problems for girls whose normal development is usually frustrated with the interruption of their studies. In addition, their lives and those of their babies are endangered because they are not yet physically, psychically and socially prepared for the delicate and responsible process of maternity.

Early marriages frequently cause the wives to stop studying, especially in the rural areas. This is cause for concern, since it reflects a degree of backwardness in women who still view marriage as an end and a goal. This phenomenon is also found in urban areas, but to a lesser extent.

It is absolutely necessary to continue our educational efforts aimed at preparing the new generations for love, marriage and having families, and to show young people of both sexes what responsibilities are in-

volved in having sexual relations and establishing a home.

The creation of the material conditions for a family

The people's buying power has gradually increased, and now the average monthly wage is \$176. In addition, there is job security and women's incorporation in work, which gives the people economic stability and steadily raises the standard of living. The Revolution has skimped no effort or resources to provide family well-being and meet the material and spiritual needs of families.

For this purpose, the number of social institutions that contribute so much to the work of educating children and young people and that provide care for old people — nursery schools, schools at which lunch is provided, scholarship schools, vacation camps and old people's homes — has been increased.

Likewise, the workers' dining rooms have been improved and increased, as have the household appliance, shoe and other repair shops. The dry cleaning and laundry services and the number of laundromats have been increased; there are already 583 of these units throughout the country. Sales of household appliances that make housework easier have grown considerably. More than 460,000 refrigerators, 800,000 television sets and 693,000 washing machines have been distributed since 1979.

In spite of this progress, the sphere of services to the population hasn't reached the required levels of efficiency yet. Sometimes the quality of the repair work done on household appliances, shoes and other items leaves much to be desired. Time and again, service guarantees aren't respected, and customers are required to pay again for fixing the same thing, which makes repairs more expensive and irritates the customers. Moreover, not all the provinces have established hours for the service units that make it possible for workers to use these services, and the items left to be repaired aren't always ready when promised, resulting in delays that adversely affect the people.

We will pass on our concern to the agencies in charge of this activity, so they may see to it that measures are taken to provide top-quality services of this kind to workers' families.

The network of hotels and restaurants is being improved. The Model Unit Movement has made an important contribution in this regard. Likewise, the system of offering unrationed agricultural produce at slightly higher prices and the supply of semiprocessed, packed, canned and other products that are easy to prepare have been a help that should be extended as much as the country's development permits.

The provisions for making it easier for working women to purchase foodstuffs and industrial products, eliminating unnecessary delays, has provided considerable benefits during these years. Of course, new situa-

tions arise as more and more women are joining the work force and the supplies of articles on the market are increased. It is necessary to analyze these plans in terms of present conditions and adapt them correspondingly. Likewise, the efforts to improve the functioning of grocery stores and supermarkets, whose service is frequently inadequate, should be continued.

There are 835 nursery schools in Cuba, benefiting more than 89,900 working families in an important way, providing appropriate education and care for their children during their first few years of life — when intensive, fundamental care is required.

In view of the great importance of this service, the Ministry of Education is striving to meet the requirements established for their functioning, but some nursery schools in various provinces have deficiencies which have even led to the sudden, temporary closing of some of them, creating problems for working mothers. The causes are attributed to construction or maintenance problems, interruptions in the supply of gas or water, staff absences and other factors. Other agencies are responsible for solving some of these problems, but lack of dynamism and of efforts by those in charge of the nursery schools — not only in solving but also in preventing these problems — is often noted.

We cannot accept attitudes of indolence or resignation. The nursery schools are particularly loved by the members of the FMC, many of whom helped to build them and start them functioning. Therefore, we cannot allow carelessness that harms this service, so highly esteemed and cherished by our people. Efforts should be made to remedy these deficiencies permanently.

Quality in the work of education, the maintenance of optimal conditions of hygiene, the best possible care of the children, and the permanent functioning of these institutions are priority goals which should be systematically checked.

Vacation plans should also play an important role in terms of education and recreation, and they should be further improved to meet the workers' needs. The same is true of the Pioneer camps, where our children spend their vacations.

In planning the production and purchases of consumer goods and in laying down the guidelines for raising the people's standard of living, we should continue the efforts that have been made to give priority to solving problems related to food supplies, social services, sales and repairs of household appliances, repairs and maintenance of housing and other problems that affect workers' families, and whose solution will benefit women in particular.

Farm women

Farm women have had a tremendous influence within the family to promote the adoption of new forms of production — a task that is of fundamental importance for development. No one knows better than they all the injustices of capitalism or is better qualified for evaluating the great possibilities offered by today's society.

Throughout the past 25 years, farm women have staunchly defended the Revolution and systematically supported all of its activities. In the FMC-ANAP Mutual Help Brigades — an important step in their development — they have made an effective contribution to promoting agricultural plans. At present, farm women constitute 27 percent of the members of cooperatives. Many have deservedly become members of the Advances Workers' Movement, which has played a very important role in the National Association of Small Farmers' tasks. In 1983 alone, 22,476 women were admitted to the Movement.

Our farming areas now have all the basic health and education services, and new communities are springing up all over with electric installations, roads, highways, running water and other advances that benefit families. These are impressive achievements. We must continue to support the cooperative movement by working together to show its tremendous advantages and promote women's participation in it.

As advances are made in the establishment of new forms of production, we should continue to increase the number of jobs that are open to women, in line with the possibilities of each cooperative, which will make it possible for more women to work to build the future of the Cuban countryside.

Education and culture: rights of all

During the last 25 years, thoroughgoing changes have been wrought in education in Cuba, making it possible for the masses to really exercise this right in our country.

Right from the start, by giving women access to education the Revolution guaranteed one of their most treasured goals, since the educational gap between men and women prior to 1959 constituted another facet of inequality. A fundamental part of the FMC's work has been to promote and develop all activities aimed at raising the cultural and technical levels of women.

Many women who now hold positions of responsibility in various spheres of our economy, in the services and in administrative or political leadership, learned how to read and write during the Literacy Campaign. Some took courses in the Ana Betancourt Schools for Farm Girls, the night schools for domestic servants, or the first schools for nursery school personnel, or took courses that trained them as poultry technicians, trac-

tor drivers, lathe operators or solderers.

The Ministry of Education and the FMC made a tremendous joint effort to give all women — especially housewives — the opportunity to continue to raise their educational level. The main achievements in this field included the victorious campaign to have everyone complete at least the sixth grade, with the graduation of 300,000 housewives in the 1976-80 period. UNESCO presented the FMC with the Nadezhda Krupskaya Award in recognition of this achievement.

The present requirements of development call for greater technical-professional training and a higher cultural level. A campaign is now being waged for everyone to complete at least the ninth grade, and our organization should promote the incorporation of housewives in the Workers' and Farmers' Junior High School (SOC) programs. Already, 30,199 women have been graduated from this level.

Women now constitute 43.2 percent of the students in adult education classes. This is encouraging, *but it is necessary to increase housewives' incorporation in the SOC classrooms, making better use of existing facilities and creating others, especially in the urban and suburban areas, to ensure that women won't fall behind in their cultural preparation. We should create the conditions for increasing housewives' participation in the campaign to complete at least the ninth grade, stimulating study and using the guidebooks put out by the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions in study circles.*

The new generations' training is guaranteed through the regular system of education, which has already borne fruit in technical and cultural training for the young people, which will guarantee that the advances of the scientific-technical revolution are applied in our country.

Young women have benefited from the countless possibilities provided for training in line with their inclinations and the country's needs, as is shown by the large number of women who are intermediate-level and higher-level technicians. They are already making their contribution to the economy and have great possibilities for continuing their studies.

Girls are aware of the need for professional and cultural training. This is shown by the enrollment figures for women in senior high schools (where they constitute 57.1 percent of the students) and universities (where they constitute 52.7 percent of the students), where important increases have been registered. Great possibilities also exist for enrolling in technical and professional training courses, for more than 140 specialties as skilled workers or intermediate-level technicians are open to thousands of girls to whom these schools offer a means for being trained for carrying out tasks of basic importance in the present stage of development.

As may be seen, the opportunities offered to young girls in the skilled worker courses are tremendously varied and appreciable advances have

been made, but not all the vacancies for women in these courses are filled. One of the factors responsible for this has clearly been the prejudice that still considers these technical specialties and jobs to be for men only. In many cases, the advantages of these options, which enable them to do interesting, well-paid work, are not considered; there are still some families that prefer their daughters to go in for the traditional women's jobs and who influence them with these views when they make their choices.

It is important to point out that 49.6 percent of the students in courses for intermediate-level technicians are girls and that some interesting and necessary specialties for which not many girls apply — such as metallurgy, energy, transportation and machinery construction — still have vacancies.

For these reasons, the FMC, the Ministry of Education, the Union of Young Communists and the student organizations should continue to increase the amount of information available about this type of studies; all must work constantly to urge girls who have graduated from the ninth grade to take the most needed technical specialties and act to do away with the prejudices and discriminatory concepts that still exist concerning women's participation in these important jobs.

The raising of the educational level of women and their active presence in political, economic and social life has made it possible for them to take an outstanding place in the sphere of literature and art, contributing with their creative talents to different cultural manifestations that, under capitalism, were closed to them because of the social alienation and inferiority to which they were subjected and the elitist nature of these activities.

Women have attained great success as writers, journalists, painters, sculptors and ceramicists. As dancers, singers, musicians, actresses, choreographers, composers and playwrights, many women have achieved outstanding triumphs, of which our people are proud. Moreover, a large number of women participate in the amateur artists' movement, and, along with the rest of our people, women attend all the cultural activities that are offered for recreation and aesthetic enjoyment — which contributes to their spiritual enrichment and to greater development of their general cultural level. Their level of appreciation is constantly rising.

Cuban women can and should help to raise the aesthetic values of the family, especially of young people, helping to mold their likes and dislikes, instilling good reading habits and increasing their knowledge about the various artistic and literary manifestations.

Political and ideological education

During the past years, many ways have been developed for promoting

the political-ideological education of women. Ideas change more slowly than structures, so the work of political education should be maintained and improved, keeping in mind the need for the members of our organization to obtain theoretical knowledge that will enable them to become more effective in each revolutionary task and in the confrontation of the enemy's diversionary activities. *We must continue working to achieve greater quality and depth in these efforts.*

From the ideological point of view, it is undeniable that, within the general advance that has been made in terms of equality, the manifestations of discrimination that persist include some that, in some cases, are exercised by women themselves.

We still find women who limit themselves or who feel that other women don't have all the qualities required for responsible positions of leadership because of their housework or other limitations. In many homes, the women take over all the housework, do not permit the men in the family to lend a hand, and teach their children patterns in which certain games or tasks are for boys and others for girls.

Sometimes, on evaluating "moral" problems, we see that some women have discriminatory ideas and that they subject their women comrades to stronger censure than the men. We must go to these women and help them to understand the reality of the period in which we are living. We should also reinforce our systematic work with women who are indolent in carrying out their social functions as workers, mothers and citizens.

Likewise, the FMC should increase its work with young women who are neither studying nor working and do whatever is necessary to get them involved in our activities, so they will play an active role in the community. At the same time, in line with the possibilities of each place, we should try to get them back into the classroom or work place.

As regards the international situation, the most recent period has coincided with Reagan and his reactionary clique's gaining control of the U.S. Government. We have seen a headlong, crazy arms race in which, along with the most virulent propaganda campaign against socialism that has been waged to date, the imperialists have instigated and carried out direct, openly interventionist military attacks in various parts of the world, trying to hold back the course of history because it leads to socialism. Their hatred of the Soviet Union, of our country and of the other peoples of the socialist community has been exacerbated, as has their fury against the national liberation movements and the other forces that defend national sovereignty and democracy, and are advancing surely in our part of the world and in Asian and African countries.

Just 90 miles away from the most savage imperialism known to mankind, our Revolution is stronger and more thoroughly consolidated than ever, after a quarter of a century. The Cuban people are more united and firm, serene, solidly prepared for waging a people's war if necessary.

The imperialists will never be able to open even a tiny breach with their ideological diversionism, seeking to introduce ideas that go counter to our revolutionary principles. We have the antidote for the enemy's propaganda and radio poison: the benefits and the happiness we have achieved, our confidence in the future, our love for the Revolution and each of its works (which are the fruit of the efforts of all). We are convinced of the justice of its purposes and have the firm determination to advance together with the Party and our Commander in Chief in the battle to defend our achievements.

The imperialists spend enormous resources and use the most advanced techniques and highly trained cadres in their diversionary propaganda, cultural and ideological penetration and massive spreading of calumny and lies to confuse world public opinion. *Therefore, it is ever more important to raise the people's level of information and improve our work of ideological education, combating every manifestation of negligence, selfishness, showing off, sponging, and other bourgeois hangovers. We should see to it that all of the aspects of socialist legality are observed and get members of the Federation who are workers to set good examples in their work places.*

The attitude of Cuban women toward continuing the work of the Revolution

Throughout this paper, I have referred again and again to the exemplary attitude of Cuban women.

Women's participation in the work force and the revolutionary firmness of the women workers, farmers, intellectuals, technicians, artists and scientists who systematically strive to do their utmost in each task are very satisfactory. The struggle to increase productivity and attain greater quality in production, the campaign to save energy and raw materials, to do more with less and to achieve top work discipline are important goals for all women workers. The need to raise standards, combat sloppy work, respect the people and give the people the best service in each place of work should govern women's participation in the struggle to advance the economy.

Women should be standard-bearers in meeting these goals on all fronts of production and service.

Women workers are striving tirelessly to build socialism, but tens of thousands of housewives are making their contribution, too, playing an active role in all community tasks. They have acquired a new social dimension that has done away with the passive image of housewives in capitalist society: women limited to the bounds of their home, unappreciated and discriminated against.

They carry out educational and social tasks and also do productive

work, channeled through numerous mobilizations for voluntary work, making a systematic contribution to the country's economy.

Housewives, along with women workers, have done commendable work in the sugarcane and tobacco harvests, especially during campaigns to combat sugarcane smut and blue mold blight; to confront natural disasters that have, time and again, made it necessary to replant; and to harvest high-value crops, such as coffee, or other crops that must be supplied to the population. Many hygiene and clean-up campaigns have also been waged to promote the people's health.

Because of their importance, these tasks should continue to be carried out in the coming years, for they contribute to our development plans.

Women work constantly in the struggle for savings, which is an aspect of fundamental importance for our economy. All Cuban revolutionaries should always strive to make economic use of light and water; collect raw materials; refrain from acquiring unnecessary things that are later thrown away; and teach all the members of their families not to waste anything in their daily lives, thus forming a habit of saving.

Young women who, through the facilities created by the Revolution, have had an opportunity to be trained and who have the basic mission of contributing to the country's development, adding their intelligence and knowledge to each task, also have an important role to play.

Many girls are already making their contribution in the Technical Youth Brigades and the top-priority tasks that are carried out in our country. As professionals, technicians and workers, these girls who have answered the call of their homeland are showing the way for many others who will also have the honor of creating the future.

My generation had the task of laying the bases for our communist society. Today's strong, revolutionary young people, who are convinced of the rightness of our work, have the task of constantly improving it, demonstrating the superiority of socialism in the political, social and economic spheres. This will show results achieved on each work front and in each aspect of national life for the full realization of the most just and beautiful hopes of mankind.

I could say a lot about the attitude of Cuban women, their deep revolutionary convictions, and their fidelity to the principles of proletarian internationalism. We have expressed permanent solidarity with our sisters who, in all parts of the world, are standing up against imperialism in the defense of their sovereignty and freedom. We are supporting those who are already advancing along the paths of justice, especially those who are building socialism, making a reality of their people's most cherished aspirations.

This friendship which unites us across the seas and in all latitudes — this friendship which contributed to the survival of our Revolution in the most difficult moments — makes the enemy tremble, for he knows how

strong solidarity is.

The women technicians, teachers, construction workers, doctors and specialists in various sectors are making whatever sacrifices are necessary. They are contributing to the development and happiness of sister peoples in many parts of the world and represent the internationalist aspirations of hundreds of thousands of women.

The mothers of the heroic internationalists who were killed have set a worthy example of revolutionary firmness of principles, turning their grief into energy, into readiness to fight, and expressing their determination to take their children's places. These mothers even offer their other children to their homeland, as Mariana Grajales did a century ago.

The defense of our homeland: our first duty

During the past 25 years, women have taken an active part in the tasks of defense, first as members of the Revolutionary National Militias and taking courses in first aid, ready to confront enemy attack. Secondly, with their systematic support for every task suggested by the Revolutionary Armed Forces, in the activities of civil defense, and in their permanent readiness to take up arms whenever it might be necessary.

Aware of the need to constantly improve the organization of all our people for the defense of our socialist homeland, members of the Federation of Cuban Women engage in many social, ideological, productive and recreational activities to support our Revolutionary Armed Forces.

With a view to strengthening the country's defenses and fighting capacity we have given special attention to making young people feel more aware of and responsible for their duties in General Military Service, contributing to the formation of a sense of discipline and a high concept of their obligations in defense — tasks which, because of their importance, should continue to be developed in the coming years.

Thousands of women all over the country have also worked to build camouflage areas and other means of defense against enemy attack and to support the Revolutionary Armed Forces by improving the living conditions at the units in times of peace and war.

Special attention has always been given to training members of the Federation in civil defense, and we should continue to do this on a permanent basis. Last year, we took part in the Bastión 83 exercise and in the tasks stemming from it, in order to acquire the necessary preparation for playing the basic role that organized women will be called upon to play in the defense areas.

When our Commander in Chief issued his call for people to join the Territorial Troop Militias, Cuban women expressed their readiness to take their places in the trenches if it became necessary. At that time, more than 1.8 million women immediately pledged to join the Militias,

joining the tens of thousands who were already in them. Now, half the members of the Territorial Troop Militias are women. Hundreds of thousands of women all over the country are being trained in what to do in case of war — women whose attitude deserves recognition by all our people.

Our Commander in Chief's praise of women's interest in and readiness to take up the tasks of defense and of their exemplary discipline in combat training, has been a tremendous stimulus for every militiawoman and commits us even more to be punctual, to have perfect attendance and to make the most of every course that is given.

In all the provinces, the abilities of dozens of command cadres have been brought out. These cadres have acquired dexterity, a command of military terminology and knowledge which will enable them to serve competently in case of aggression.

In the sphere of defense, our first Women's Volunteer Military Service Artillery Regiment, which forms part of the regular units of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, deserves special mention. Women have shown that they are ready to take their places in the people's war if imperialism tries to wrest our achievements from us. Therefore, tasks of defense should continue to be given priority, so we can carry out all the missions assigned to us by the Revolutionary Armed Forces and our Commander in Chief.

We are prepared for combat, to withstand any kind of aggression. We are determined never to cede even a millimeter of our beloved land to the enemy and not to retreat, no matter how hard the aggressor's thrust may be. Our people's courage makes us invincible. Men and women together, with our Party and led by our Commander in Chief, we will take up all the battles: that of building our socialist society and that of defending our Revolution and our homeland, giving our lives, if necessary, to do so.

Socialism: the only system in which women attain complete liberation and full equality

As may be deduced from everything that has been said in this paper, the advances in the battle for the full exercise of equality have been considerable and have been made simultaneously with economic progress and the raising of the people's political and ideological level — especially that of women.

We reaffirm our conviction that only in socialism are the bases laid for women to achieve complete liberation, because only this system gives them true access to opportunities and possibilities for developing themselves as free people with personalities of their own and in conditions of absolutely equal rights and duties. Some hangovers of discrimination which we have analyzed in this paper still hinder the attainment of this

priority of the Revolution, however, and must be overcome.

We have come an important part of the way and must continue onward, struggling along with our comrades, because as Fidel said in the 2nd Congress of the FMC, "The day must come when we have a Party of men and women, a leadership of men and women, a state of men and women and a government of men and women. . ."

This need of the Revolution will be met, because it is a priority goal of our Communist Party, supported by all of society. Comrade Fidel has done a tremendous job of education, defending the legitimate principles of equality in all stages with the firmness of his deep revolutionary conviction. A true teacher of the masses, in this battle too, he has clearly set forth the guidelines for achieving victory.

Working together with our comrades on all fronts, struggling with our people to make this marvelous work greater every day, donning militia uniforms and taking up arms to destroy all who try to halt the invincible advance of the Revolution, we will continue advancing in the full exercise of equality.

We will always strive to be worthy of the confidence placed in us by Fidel, of the hopes that he has deposited in Cuban women, of his permanent stimulus and of the faith he expressed on January 1, 1959, the day of victory, that the women would be a firm pillar of our Revolution.

Our Party can always count on the strength, creative capacity, intelligence, vanguard attitude and firm internationalist feeling of women. Worthy descendants of Mariana Grajales, Haydée Santamaria and Celia Sánchez, we Cuban women will always be in the vanguard of the Revolution.