



JOHN FICARA—NEWSPHOTOS

'Stand Up Like Women'

OPINION/PATT DERIAN



Brace yourself: an avalanche of patronizing arrogance is about to be visited on women. As the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women gets under way in Nairobi, commentators around the globe insist that if women had anything in common, it wouldn't be much. Western pundits caution their countries' representatives "not to get into issues they don't understand" and warn that Third World delegates will be "controversial" and try to politicize the conference. Developing nations admonish their delegates to put narrow women's interests aside and concentrate on the economic and political oppression by the industrialized world.

Thus instructed, the delegates are sent forth to meet their enemies, to take up the north-south dialogue and perform the time-honored rituals of the contentious international conference. If all goes as directed, the conference in Nairobi will be just as empty as those held by men. And it could even provide a titillating spectacle: women mixing it up with amendments and issues, like mud wrestlers splattering the well dressed who have drawn back from the fray.

But don't bet on it. The last 10 years have been very productive. The universality, and variety, of discrimination against women is common knowledge now. Nobody is really surprised to learn that it is not exactly the same from country to country; nor does it seem surprising that there are women of privilege and women who suffer mightily in each place. These newly cataloged realities are not weapons for women to use against each other but facts that enlarge the picture of the plight of women.

Yet opponents of the idea of a women's movement try hard to exploit the notion that for women in developing nations, "other" rights should come first. They make a false distinction between women's rights and human or political rights, as though women's lives were simple and that women were neither human nor political.

Goals: The black women of South Africa, deprived of basic citizenship rights and consigned to barren "homelands" by their white government, have no legal redress. Their problems are multiple. They are consigned to homelands because they are women who are forbidden to live with their families be-

cause they are black and their government's policy is to control the number of black people living in the cities. Each woman is affected by being female, black and without political rights. If such a woman has any energy left after eking out a living, she will work to end apartheid, to rise above subsistence, to live where she chooses and have a say in what laws govern her. But she cannot achieve those goals alone.

When apartheid is introduced as an agenda item in Nairobi, it is a legitimate issue. Of course it is political; of course it is a human-rights problem. And of course it is an issue for an international conference on the condition of women in the world. It is as foolish to say that this is not a woman's issue as it is to

The opportunity to advance the possible as well as the necessary is at hand in Nairobi.

say that there are certain nations whose people are not "ready" for democracy. Just as there is no way for citizens to get ready for democracy without instituting it, there is no way for women's problems to be addressed without acknowledging them and outlining a comprehensive action plan.

Spare all women the development experts who preach that Third World women regard political empowerment, child care and wage rates as luxuries for the rich that are irrelevant to them. That women from poorer countries have neither interest nor time for "narrow women's issues" is given the lie by the work they have done in their own countries to improve life for the woman on the bottom of the ladder. In India, young women whose dowries cannot be further supplemented by their families are doused with gasoline and set afire by their husbands so that new brides and other dowries can be obtained. Yet it is a brilliant female supreme-court advocate who keeps the crime of "bride burning" before the public and in the courts. In Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea, the bodies of Asian women are

the raw materials for a thriving sex-tour industry. Yet it is the women of Asia who work to shut down such "businesses."

Terrible poverty allows bride burning and prostitution to happen because women who are used, mutilated or sold by others are utterly powerless. The powerlessness of such a vast number of women is made possible even in countries where women nominally have political rights, because of custom and illiteracy as well as poverty. For millions of people there are no choices. The past decade, with its conferences, reports and statistics, was meant to detail this shadowy world of women. That world turns out to be dangerous, cruel and filled with suffering. The larger world can afford to look at it.

Power: The Nairobi conference is charged with devising a grand design to improve the condition of women within the next 15 years. That will require tough work, long hours, compromise and problem solving. That's politics. Every bit of power should be used to present tough, ideal standards to be met by governments, business and industry.

On the eve of the conference, Japan and Egypt passed newsworthy legislation affecting women. Japan's is a weak, first step toward eliminating the severe discrimination against the country's 24 million working women. Egypt's pays lip service to every man's "right to polygamy" but requires that women be informed when they have been divorced and that divorces be registered. Thin soup, but soup, nonetheless. Either government might have acted eventually, but the need to carry something praiseworthy to Nairobi was surely a factor. Thus, two laws are now on the books that can be amended and strengthened.

In the face of the intricate as well as the gross discrimination against women, it takes a special kind of condescension to say that the problems are so overwhelming that an agenda of action must be limited to what is "doable." There are always those willing to place limits on the possible. But the opportunity to advance the possible as well as the necessary is at hand in Nairobi. If its representatives will stand up and act like women, the conference will meet the challenge.

Derian, assistant secretary of state for human rights in the Carter administration, is a writer and consultant on human rights.

as an issue of feminism countries do provide reform



Kenyan Culture Minister Kenneth Matiba (left) opens Forum '85 as organizers, including Dame Nita Barrow (right), look on: Eclectic

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Women '85: Gains and Losses

Thousands of delegates gather in Nairobi to assess 10 years of mixed results.

American women sporting backpacks and sandals mingled with Asians clad in elegant saris and kimonos. Graceful Maasai women, adorned with necklaces and earrings of brightly colored beads, strolled past Iranians covered by somber black chadors. More than 10,000 women swarmed into Nairobi last week to open the two-phase conference that marks the end of the United Nations Decade for Women. Though harmony prevailed as small groups of women exchanged ideas, some worried that political grandstanding could disrupt the conferees' hopes for solidarity.

The three-week women's conference, convened to appraise the decade's accomplishments and design strategies for the future, was launched last week with Forum '85, a meeting of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) from around the world. The forum's eclectic agenda offered thousands of events—from music recitals and meditation classes to panel discussions on wife-beating, incest and the Iran-Iraq war. Dame Nita Barrow, a president of the World Council of Churches from Barbados who organized the forum, called it "a meeting of the minds."

But many women found themselves en-

tangled in logistical snags even before the forum officially began. Though Kenya had spent \$1.5 million to spruce up its hotels and highways, dozens of participants who had paid hundreds of dollars in advance arrived to find neither hotel rooms nor compensation. NGO participants fortunate enough to have hotel rooms were brusquely ordered to vacate them by the end of the week so the delegates to the official U.N. conference, which opens this week, would have accommodations. The crisis fizzled when NGO delegates agreed, in a spirit of compromise, to give up half their rooms to the U.N. delegates. Later, political sparks flew when Salwa Abu Khadra, head of the General Union of Palestinian Women, attacked Israel for refusing to allow five senior Palestinians travel permits to attend the conference. The Israeli delegation claimed that one of the women denied travel to Nairobi had been involved in a hijacking.

Wrangling: That dispute may have hinted at the tenor of this week's official meeting, when delegates from 140 countries will voice their governments' positions on key issues. Mindful of the political wrangling that marred the decade's initial gathering in Mexico City and a 1980 conference in Co-

penhagen, Western delegates will try to steer clear of such potentially divisive subjects as apartheid, the rights of Palestinian and nuclear disarmament—issues that some Third World conferees are deter-



From India: Appraisals and strategies



AP, MARK PETERS



Kenyan choir, U.S. feminist Betty Friedan conducts an informal seminar: 'Meeting of minds'?

nined to introduce. Many delegates from developing countries worry that the U.S. delegation, headed by Maureen Reagan, will try to dictate the direction of the conference by blocking discussion of politically sensitive issues and by calling for consensus, rather than a majority vote, on the conference's final Forward Looking Strategies for the Year 2000. On the eve of the conference, Maureen Reagan conceded that political debate was unavoidable, but insisted it should be limited to the context of women's rights. "If we are going to talk about apart-

heid, let's talk about the unique effect on women," she told NEWSWEEK's Diane Weathers. "We are not going to decide what to do about the government of South Africa in 12 days. That is patently absurd."

Sadly, there is no certainty that the delegates will ultimately be able to transcend politics-as-usual and address the issues that unite them as women. The decade's notable advances remain overshadowed by lingering inequities. While literacy and life expectancy rates are up, females born in developing countries still live an average of 15 years less than those born in industrialized nations. And women are still on the losing half of a lopsided equation: they perform two-thirds of the world's work, but earn only one-tenth of its income and own less than one hundredth of its property. Representing half of the world's population, women still remain bound by cultural, political and economic constraints that prevent them from becoming the full equals of men. And nowhere is women's burden heavier than in the Third World.

Survival: Throughout the developing world the punishments of economic recession, drought and political repression have fallen hardest on women. They head 80 percent of all Cambodian refugee households and, with their children, compose 90 percent of the Ethiopian refugees now living in Somalia. The staggeringly high rates of illiteracy—73 percent in all of Africa—prevent women from finding higher paying jobs, or even from just tending to their own health. The spread of Islamic fundamental-

ism has dramatically redefined, and limited, women's roles and rights in Muslim countries from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. And longstanding cultural traditions—dowry systems, female infanticide and religious prohibitions against family planning—have kept women in developing nations centuries behind their counterparts in the developed world. At a time when women in industrialized countries are fighting for access to corporate ladders and day care for their children, many Third World women are struggling just to maintain their most basic human right: survival.

Undervalued: Just a few miles from the Kenyatta Conference Center, where the Nairobi delegates will convene, women from Kenya's Kikuyu tribe will be hauling their family's supply of firewood on their permanently bent backs. Their lot underscores a telling point: in all parts of the world, the bulk of women's daily work—often the equivalent of two eight-hour days—earns no pay. And women's labor outside the home is, more often than not, significantly undervalued. Since 1975 women have entered the world's labor force at a rate of 10 million each year. By 1983 90 countries had adopted equal-pay legislation. But women, more vulnerable to unemployment and usually consigned to the lower-paying service sector, still earned an average of only 73 cents for every dollar a man earned.

Such institutionalized discrimination has fostered a feminization of poverty throughout the world. As a result of divorce, male



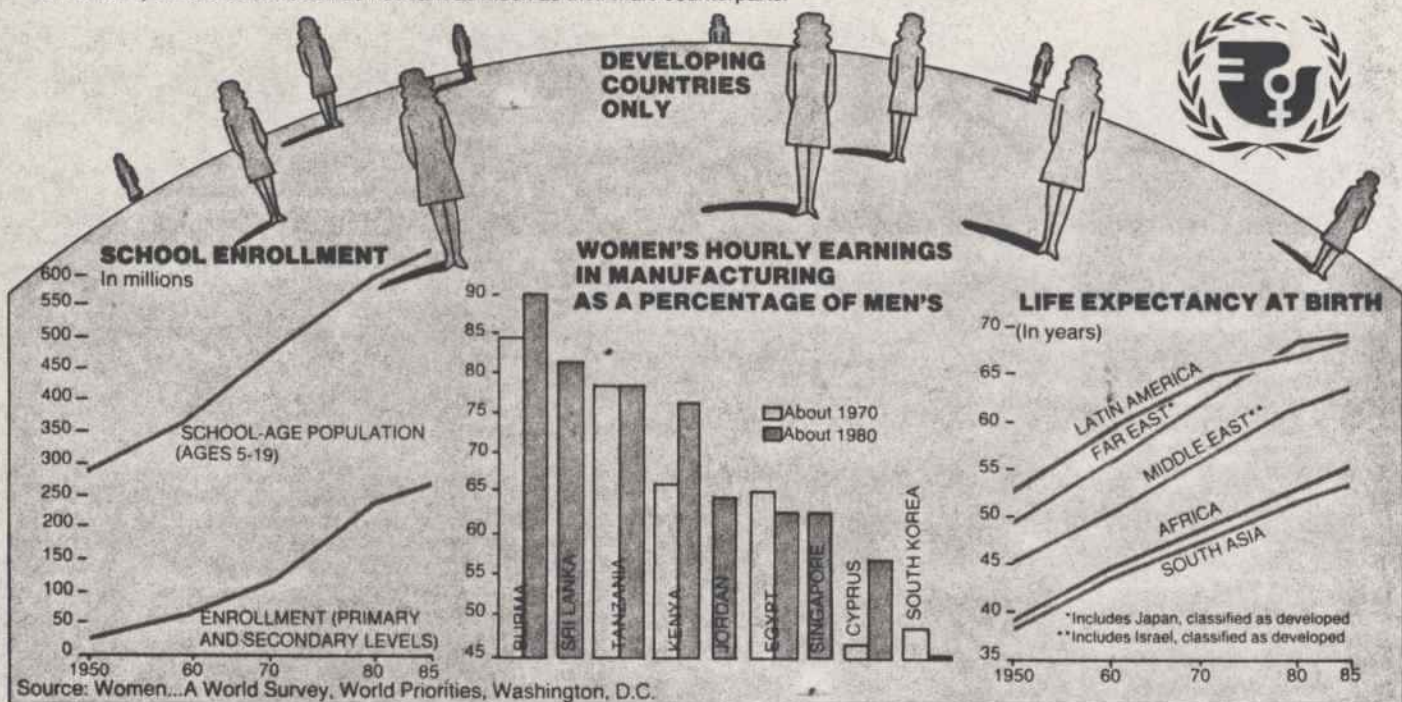
Kenyan delegates: Politics as usual?

What unites Kenyan women is real politics



WHERE DO THE WORLD'S WOMEN STAND?

Throughout the Third World, life-expectancy and school-attendance rates for women have risen steadily. But even though 100 million women have entered the workplace since 1975, female laborers still do not earn as much as their male counterparts.



migration from rural areas to cities and the death of spouses (on average, women live up to six years longer than men), nearly one-third of the world's families are now headed by women. Those families often fall victim to the mother's limited earning power; even in the United States, females head half of all families living below the official poverty line. Says Elise Smith, executive director of OEF International, a Washington-based organization that provides development aid to Third World women: "The equity issues are still important, but the priorities are now on economic issues."

'Industriousness': From Mexico's *campesina* to the peasant woman of the African bush, women's work sustains rural society. "Thai farmers are known for their world-class industriousness and high rate of productivity... and sometimes, their husbands even help them out," quipped an American academic at a recent conference in the United States. The scope of that assertion extends far beyond the boundaries of Thailand. Women produce 50 percent of the world's food, though they receive only a fraction of the development aid earmarked for agriculture. And in Africa, where women produce a full 80 percent of the continent's food, the farmers' husbands are often not around to help. As more men migrate to the cities in search of better employment opportunities—sometimes leaving their families for months at a time—women are left behind to assume wage-earning responsibilities in addition to their grueling housekeeping and child-rearing tasks.

At her rural home in Zimbabwe, Teckla Tsikirai's 18-hour day begins at 5 a.m. when

she trots a half-mile from her cinder-block home to collect well water for washing and cooking. By sunrise she has swept the clay forecourt and prepared tea and porridge for her seven children. Tsikirai spends hours weeding and watering her vegetable garden, cooking lunch and dinner, and husking corn with her children before she retires at 11 p.m. Four times a week she trudges several miles across the lands north of Harare, foraging for firewood, which she will later haul home on her back. Her husband, a carpenter in the capital, returns home about once a month. Tsikirai's only relaxation each day is a brief evening bath. "One hour from work is a loss of time," she says. "What will happen to my children's future if I waste time?" By working around-the-clock Tsikirai produces 70 bags of maize a year and sells 55 of them to the local farm board for export. She makes extra money by selling tomatoes and other vegetables in nearby towns.

Trap: Like men, women seeking better-paying employment often believe their best hope lies in the cities. In the past two years twice as many women as men have flocked to Bangkok from the Thai countryside, saturating an already-strained job market. But what many of these unskilled, often illiterate women find in the cities is simply a different kind of trap. In sweatshops throughout the capital, women huddle over assembly lines, often jeopardizing their health. Nam Pomakul, 26, broke her arm in an automatic loom last year while working at the Siam Textile plant in Bangkok. Though the company paid her hospital bills, Pomakul was denied her \$70-a-month wage (80 to 90 percent of which she sends

home to help support her family) for the duration of her monthlong convalescence. "I don't know anything about women's rights, but in our society women do not have any right to complain," says Pomakul. "If I had been to school, I would try to find another job—one that I would not have to risk my life on. I have no security and I always feel tomorrow will be no better."

Certainly not all female migrants to the cities suffer the hazards of factory work. The International Center for Research on Women estimates that 36 percent of the



Factory jobs: Hazards and degradation

LIANE ENWELS

WORLD AFFAIRS

Third World's small entrepreneurs are women. But tradition or religious law prohibit many of these street vendors from owning property or any other collateral. As a result, they often cannot obtain the bank credit needed to stabilize their small businesses. Cities often harbor other degradations. Hundreds of thousands of women in Southeast Asia are involved in the thriving skin trade, where some earn more in one night as bar girls or prostitutes than in one month at a factory job. "My mother and father would die if they knew I worked here," says one 20-year-old Filipino from a farming community north of Manila who is a nightclub hostess in a raunchy tourist district. "But at least my younger brother can go to school."

Luxury: Throughout much of the developing world, school is still a luxury bestowed on boys. Though school-attendance rates for girls have risen sharply in developing countries, many young women are still kept at home to help run the household and care for younger children. And while spending on education worldwide has skyrocketed during the last 20 years, women still outnumber men as illiterates by about 3 to 2. In the Third World literacy rates are a function of economics. In the petroleum-rich country of Kuwait, for example, female literacy advanced from 42 percent in 1970 to 54 percent in 1980, while barely more than 16 percent of the women are literate in oil-dry South Yemen.

Often, when women are better educated, they opt to have fewer children, thereby safeguarding their own health and the health of their babies. In Mexico studies show that uneducated women have an average of 5.6 children, while those with secondary or university education have an average of 2.2 children. Worldwide the average

number of children women want has dropped from six to four in one generation. Still about half of the world's women who want to plan their families have no access to contraceptives. And the World Health Organization estimates that two-thirds of all women in the developing world have no access to trained health workers.

In the People's Republic of China, however, women face a different—but equally devastating—problem. In 1979 the government of Deng Xiaoping set a goal to stabilize the country's population growth. Urban couples who agreed to limit themselves to one child were offered cash bonuses, better housing and favorable school placement for their child. Peking officials say abortions were voluntary and used only as "remedial" measures in cases of contraceptive failure. But authorities have admitted that some overzealous local cadres resorted to undue coercion—including, according to American anthropologist Steven Mosher, brutal and dangerous abortions during late stages of pregnancy. Last week, the U.S. Congress condemned China's reportedly widespread use of abortion, provoking a retaliatory protest from Peking. Said Chinese President Li Xiannian: "I think it is interference in China's internal affairs, and that is absolutely unacceptable to us."

Clashes: There are other practices that incite cultural clashes between industrialized and developing nations. Sociologists estimate that some 84 million women in 30 countries still undergo circumcision, the partial or complete—and usually crudely executed—removal of the exterior genitalia. A 10-year study in Cairo and Alexandria completed just last year found that between 70 and 80 percent of Egyptian women had had a clitoridectomy. The issue has long been a rallying point among Western feminists, and last October, 50 women from 14 African nations met in Khartoum

and agreed to campaign against the centuries-old practice, which can cause hemorrhaging, damage to the urinary tract and sometimes death. But the Third World women whose cultures prescribe circumcision as a maturation rite often bristle at outside efforts to end the practice.

In the political arena, women remain nearly as powerless as they were 10 years ago. Today women represent half the world's enfranchised population—and, with longer lives, women constitute the majority of the elderly population. Yet they hold less than 10 percent of the seats in national legislatures. According to one survey conducted by World Priorities, a Washington-based research organization, women have won the right to vote, on average, 47 years later than men. (In Kuwait, women have yet to be granted that right.) Though women have served as heads of government in 11 countries since 1975, more women—including Indira Gandhi of India and Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka—led their nations at the opening of the decade than at its close.

Spotlight: Without doubt, the Decade for Women has trained an international spotlight on women's rights. Ninety percent of the world's governments now have organizations promoting the advancement of women, and half of them were created in the last 10 years. But the consciousness-raising of the last decade must now give way to the implementation of programs and policies that will ensure women's health, economic equality and political clout. "After the conference," says Leticia Shahani, the Filipino secretary-general of the conference, "we will be entering the era of concrete action and less advocacy." And then, it is hoped, women's work will finally begin to be done.

MARILYN ACHIRON with RAY WILKINSON in Nairobi, DIANE WEATHERS in Washington, FRANK GIBNEY Jr. in Bangkok, MELINDA LIU in Hong Kong and bureau reports



Harvesting coffee beans, hauling wood in Kenya: In all parts of the world, the bulk of women's daily work earns no pay



Iranian women-at-arms: Redefining the roles—and very essence—of Muslim women's lives

Under Islam's Rules

As Islamic fundamentalism surges across the Middle East and North Africa, it is redefining the roles, rights and very essence of women's lives. In the broad, hot arc of the earth from Morocco to Turkey to Pakistan, fundamentalism's stern religious ethics are clashing headlong with Western concepts that have been making slow inroads for decades. In Egypt Muslim extremists are challenging the moderate government of President Hosni Mubarak to curb what they see as the country's excessive freedom for women. In Saudi Arabia elderly sheiks debate on television whether women should be allowed to smoke, wear jewelry or drive cars. Throughout the region, fundamentalism is a divisive ideological wedge that is provoking an identity crisis for many of the women of Islam.

The key demand of Muslim radicals is the implementation of the Sharia, the 1,300-year-old legal code of Islam that prescribes the responsibilities of men—and proscribes, at least by Western standards, equality for women. For when strictly interpreted, the Sharia dictates much more than that women wear the traditional garments that cover all but the face. By Islamic rules, a woman's testimony in court carries half the weight of a man's and a daughter's inheritance is half that of a son's. The Sharia also discourages women from associating and competing with men, a stricture that affects everything from what restaurants a woman may frequent to the kind of education and jobs she can expect.

Nowhere have the enormous changes imposed upon women been more evident than

in revolutionary Iran. Under 50 years of Pahlavi rule, Western ideas—ranging from Paris fashions to the desegregation of public transportation—had gradually permeated the attitudes and life-styles of Iranian women. And despite the corrupt excesses of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's regime, the former leader actively promoted legal reforms that granted them greater rights, including a virtual ban on polygamy.

But in the militant climate of Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran, the zealots have all but extinguished the country's incipient wom-

en's movement. Though women continued to wear tight jeans and dresses after the 1979 revolution, enforcement took a brutal turn in 1982, when "morality squads" of Islamic extremists began patrolling the streets in search of women who were "improperly" dressed. When spotted, some women were dragged away and beaten, or had their dresses ripped open in public. Others were hauled off to court and sentenced to fines or floggings. But the squads' harsh methods prompted widespread rioting last March, and the attacks stopped. Teheran now posts signs everywhere that read, "Sisters, Please Observe Islamic Morality."

Will: The entreating tone, however, belies the fact that adherence to the Sharia is stringently enforced. Women who are not draped from head to toe in the somber black chador, or cloak, or in the compulsory head scarf and tunic risk imprisonment without trial. Women are free to choose their husbands. But should a man die without leaving a will in her favor, his widow is deprived of virtually all of his property. While education and job opportunities appear equal—women still work as lawyers and engineers—most women are paid less than their male counterparts. And they are pushed into professions like teaching or nursing—away from jobs that might bring them in contact with men.

For all that, there is still an undercurrent of defiance in Iran among middle-class urban women, who have borne the brunt of the changes. Some question the Islamic contradiction that demands that women reject their corrupt, Westernized roles and at the same time take up arms for the Islamic Holy War against Iraq. Others simply find their Western freedoms and sophistication too dear to sacrifice. Indeed, some defy the Sharia by wearing provocative dresses or engaging in a bit of necking at private parties. But those are furtive gestures in a country where the Sharia has,



Students at Cairo University: A return to the veil—and a rejection of women's 'liberation'

in fact, become the law of the land.

Where Iran is repressively absolute, Egypt is all flux and paradox. Egyptian women have enjoyed decades of relative freedom compared with their counterparts in Saudi Arabia and other conservative Arab states on the Gulf. But their imported Western concepts are being seriously challenged by the country's increasingly militant Muslim population. Some Egyptian women are themselves calling for strict implementation of the Sharia, insisting it would grant them complete equality. "Islam does not need a women's-lib movement modeled after the Western one," says Zenab al Ghazali, a leader of the moderate fundamentalist group Sisters of the Muslim Brotherhood. "Men and women have the same rights under the Sharia. Problems exist because God's laws are not being applied." A telling sign of the shifting mood is that 75 percent of Egyptian women—many of them young and educated—now wear the *higab*, or veil, a significant change after 50 years of Western dress. "I'm convinced that it's better for women to wear the veil," says Maysa Mosleh, a 24-year-old Cairo University graduate. "Why should we have to wear makeup and dress just for men?"

Fears: The fundamentalist surge has put Egyptian feminists on the defensive. Jihan Sadat, who championed women's rights during her husband's presidency, wants to ensure that the progress Egyptian women have made during the past 20 years will not be completely eclipsed. "It has not been as fast or just as we wish," she told NEWSWEEK, "but at least it has happened." Nawal Saadawi, founder of the Arab Women's Solidarity Union, fears that implementation of the Sharia could well undermine those gains, because it is open to a variety of interpretations. For example, Islam forbids a man to have more than one wife if he cannot care for them equally—in most cases a seemingly effective injunction against polygamy. Earlier this month Mubarak's government passed new legislation, similar to a 1979 divorce law, that still permits wives to divorce their husbands on the grounds of inadequate love or support. But the new bill, in accordance with a conservative interpretation of the Sharia, does not prevent a man from having as many as four wives. And it leaves judgments about the quality of his care—and therefore a woman's right to divorce—at the mercy of the courts.

In Egypt and neighboring countries, women are confronted with a difficult dilemma. Many are turning to Islam precisely because foreign ideologies have failed them; so far, Western concepts have brought them neither equality nor satisfaction of their religious needs. But by embracing Islam, the quality of their lives will depend on whose interpretation prevails. Not surprisingly, that means the fate of women will probably be determined by the conservative men who hold Islam's reins of power.

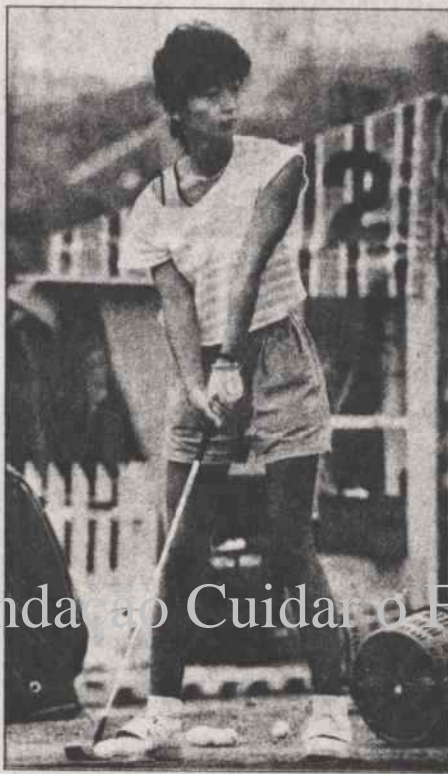
PAULA CHIN with ELIZABETH O. COLTON in Cairo, RALPH JOSEPH in Teheran and bureau reports

NEWSWEEK/JULY 22, 1985

Pioneer Days in Japan

Old ways die hard, even in countries whose names are watchwords for spectacular modernization. Just ask any ambitious young Japanese woman, for, to her, these are still very much pioneer days.

Emperor Hirohito may trace his descent from the sun goddess Amaterasu, but Japan itself has only recently—and hesitantly—begun lowering the sex barriers in what is still the most stolidly patriarchal of the world's major industrialized nations. Japanese women made an art of subservience until the end of World War II. But today they hold more than one-third of the coun-



Leisure time in Tokyo: Low aspirations

try's jobs—albeit most of them lowly—and almost half its new college degrees. And last month the Diet finally approved legislation to remove most legal obstacles to equal employment. "The bill is a step toward reality," says Mitsuko Shimomura, a senior staff writer for the Asahi Shimbun, a leading Tokyo daily newspaper. "The barriers are breaking, no matter how slowly."

One reason is that rapid modernization has cut heavily into women's traditional roles. Female life expectancy in Japan recently topped 80 years, the highest in the world. Stop-at-two-children families and the mass marketing of household appliances have sharply reduced the time that women previously devoted to homemaking and child rearing. And today barely 20 percent of adult Japanese live with their aging parents. "In the old days a woman would have four children and couldn't do anything else,"

says Nobuko Takahashi, who from 1980 to 1983 served in Denmark as Japan's first woman ambassador. "Now they're trying to figure out what to do with their time."

For those not content with playing golf or taking classes in flower arranging, an obvious answer is the job market. Japanese women have never been strangers to offices and factories—until, that is, the day that they married. That tradition has long been used to justify keeping women off longer-term—and better-paying—career paths. Even so the number of female managers in Japan has more than tripled since 1970, to 120,000 today. "The old-style Japanese businessman says the existing system was what made Japan great and it shouldn't be tampered with," says Ichiko Ishihara, a managing director of Takashimaya department stores, and one of the tiny coterie of top-level female executives. "The fact is that today you have to take women into account."

But as individuals, working Japanese women still have little leverage. Women workers in Japan earn only 52.2 percent as much as men. Many are middle-aged part-timers, working at cash registers or assembling parts in small factories for a meager \$2 to \$2.50 an hour. "The history of working women in Japan has been a struggle against cheap factory work," says Mariko Fujiwara, author of a report on women for Tokyo's Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living. "Now we are making women second-class labor all over again."

Abuses: That in fact was one reason why many Japanese women opposed the new Equal Employment Law. The law, due to take effect next April, aims to undo some of the "reforms" in Japan's old labor-standards law, which prohibited women from working after 10:00 p.m. or from putting in more than six hours of overtime a week. But given the number of jobs that still risk such abuses, one of the new law's most immediate effects could be even greater exploitation. "Many women's groups asked me to oppose it," says Tamako Nakanishi, 66, one of only 27 women in the 759-member Diet. "The majority still prefer protection to equality."

Such feelings are largely glossed over in the Japanese mass media's glowing accounts of liberated superwomen. "Young women today want a good job, a good career, a nice marriage and a family," warns Fujiwara. "They expect it all." But the hard fact is that few Japanese women so far seem willing to sacrifice a happy family life for a brilliant career—especially in the face of unremitting opposition from husbands, in-laws and parents. "Japanese women have been shut out," says former ambassador Takahashi. "They weren't raised to have aspirations." Learning how much more they can do may be the hardest lesson yet.

DAVID LEWIS with DOUG TSURUOKA and YURIKO HOSHIAI in Tokyo

