

Portugal and the International Women's Year



1. In Portugal, the year 1975 was officially recognized as the International Women's Year by a resolution of the Provisory Government in the session of January 8th 1975. The resolution reads as follows:

"The year 1975 was proclaimed the International Women's Year by the General Assembly of the United Nations. In Portugal it coincides with the consolidation of the Revolution of April 25th and its significance becomes, therefore, particularly important, for the evolution of a country in which women represent a great progressive force.

Considering the great significance and actuality of the goals which the International Women's Year is meant to reach, namely the elimination of all forms of discrimination de jure and de facto, in relation to women, the implementation of the participation of women in social progress and the recognition of their contribution on the local, national and international levels, for the establishment of peace;

Being aware, on the one hand, of the serious situations of discrimination still existing in Portugal, in what concerns the full participation of women in many sectors of the life of the country and, on the other hand, of the special opportunity which can be offered by the year we are living for a large integration of women in every aspect of the national reconstruction;

The Council of Ministers calls the attention of all the



departments of State, the Armed Forces, Political Parties, Professional organizations and other non-governmental organizations in order that, during this year, efforts may be pursued to make the Revolution now happening a Revolution with an authentic participation of women, according to the genuine character of the portuguese woman and in agreement with the guide-lines proposed by the program of the United Nations".

2. In the line of the programatic principles contained in the resolution of the Government, aiming at the integration and participation of women at every level, we could see the presence of women in high posts in Government and Administration, namely: 1 woman-Minister of Social Affairs, previously Secretary of State for Social Security, 1 woman-Secretary of State for Culture and Scientific Research, 1 woman in the Council os State and a few more in top administrative posts. This presence, however, in the most representative places doesn't exist any more at this moment, which may be considered a step-back in this type of participation.

3. On the governmental level the Comission on the Status of Women, a body for study and action in the Ministry for Social Affairs has been responsible for the official program of the International Women's Year. This Comission has had as its main concern during this year to take advantage of the existence of an International Women's Year for an action of information of public opinion, in relation to the most urgent problems concerning the status of women. Such an action has a special importance in the concrete circumstances of our country, as we have to grasp the opportunity offered by a re-



volutionary moment in which everything is questioned and many forces are at stake in order to try to achieve another revolution in the field of women's situation, which is not necessarily changed by a socialist revolution only.

The International Women's Year, however, has been a motive of interest, not only on the Governmental level, but also for non-governmental organizations of women, with different characters, either feminist, professional, partisan, religious or others, who have introduced this line in their programs and initiatives in different ways.

However, starting in the last two months of 1974, there have been efforts to bring together some of these non-governmental organizations and the Commission on the status of women, in order to elaborate a common program for the year 1975. This program should be flexible enough to allow the participation of different ideological tendencies and different views on a number of problems. On the other hand, one should stress the unifying project of this program - the promotion of the situation of women, both legal and de facto in our society.

Having discussed the meaning and opportunity of the celebration of an International Women's Year in Portugal now, it was agreed within this group that such a celebration was not envisaged, in terms of "festivities" with solemn events, but rather as a series of concrete and progressive efforts at all levels, in the way of accelerating a change in the situation of women.

As first steps to reach this goal, it was stressed the



need to "identify and denounce the areas of discrimination against women in our country", and in these terms the substantive content of the program was approved by the Commission on the Status of Women together with the non-governmental organizations. The organizations collaborating in the program are a total of 14 up till now, but the opportunity for new members remains open. Concerning this group and its composition, one should stress the very remarkable aspect of an effective plurality within it, and at the same time the capability that has been exercised to go beyond ideological differences, differences of method or others, to find a common platform of work and engagement in this action. This fact we consider extremely positive.

In the beginning of January this common program was set in motion, meant to study and reveal to public opinion the following aspects:

- Discriminations against women in Family Law.
- The participation of women in civic and political life.
- The double task of the working woman in contrast with the traditional images of the role of women.
- Differences in wages between men and women and conditions of work in industries with large numbers of working women.
- The status of women and family planning.

During the months of January and February, this groups studied and gathered material concerning the first theme and used it for information through the mass-media.

During the months of March and April the group did some research and thinking on the second theme and the material which was



collected is now being used for information of the public opinion.

The work will continue during the year 1975 in relation to the other themes, the perspective always being that of denouncing the situations of injustice and discrimination, together with positive proposals for the solution of these same situations.

4. Beyond this common program of action for the International Women's Year in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, the existence of this year has been the framework for all the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and has really been present in all the initiatives and actions.

One should stress in the first place a certain impact upon the public opinion concerning the questions inherent in the Status of Women, mainly through articles and interviews in a number of newspapers and magazines, as well as in one program in Radio and one in T.V. One should also stress the work accomplished by women-journalists, through a systematic contact and exchange of information and views, which has already had as an effect a certain impact on public opinion.

The Commission on the Status of Women has also started the publication of an Information Bulletin, mainly concerning the themes of International Women's Year and containing the more relevant national and international news.

As a project, which the Commission on the Status of Women hopes to start soon, there is the existence of one counselling office for women meant to give advice to women concerning their rights and responsibilities.



Also, there is a possibility, which is now being studied in collaboration with a group of artists, to have an exhibition with paintings by women artists to take place in Lisbon and eventually to go to other places of the country.

5. Some non-governmental organizations have also had initiatives of their own to commemorate the International Women's Year. We shall mention but some of the most relevant:

Women's Democratic Movement - This organization celebrated very specially the 8th of March - Women's International Day - with a mass meeting and other events and the edition of a special poster for the Day.

This organization is also preparing a Women's Congress in September, which will also be an important phase of preparation for the World Women's Congress to take place in Berlin in October 1975, promoted by the International Federation of Democratic Women. They have also taken part in international meetings preparatory of this World Congress, both in Warsaw and Budapest.

Another significant event was the recent visit to Portugal of Mrs. Valentina Tereshkova, member of the USSR Presidium and well-known cosmonaut.

Women's Liberation Movement - Trying to call the attention of public opinion to the discriminated status of women in many spheres of their lives, this feminist organization held a street demonstration in January 1975, which gave occasion to a violent opposition and strong protest and clearly showed the masculine patterns of Portuguese society.



Among the projects and initiatives of this organization, one should stress the League of Women's Rights, now being organized, in the line of the same so-called League in France initiated by Simone de Beauvoir. Its fundamental purpose is to study and defend the rights of women, especially in the fields of family law and professional work. There is also the possibility of the 1st International Women's Court to take place in Portugal to call the attention of the world to the crimes against women, committed and allowed by a type of society which is ruled by essentially masculine patterns.

6. In what concerns the participation of Portugal in international meetings within the International Women's Year, one should stress the participation of a portuguese delegation in the International meeting in Paris in March which was organized by the French Government, the presence of delegates of the Portuguese Comission on the Status of Women in the European Seminar in April in Brussels and the participation in Varne in the Congress of Women lawyers in May. Portugal is also present in the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico in June-July, and the points of the program have been discussed and prepared by the group of non-governmental organizations collaborating with the Comission on the Status of Women.