

Report of the First Meeting of the
WOMEN'S ECUMENICAL LIAISON GROUP
Rome, 11-13 December, 1968

INTRODUCTION

This brief report is intended simply as an instrument for the work of the members of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group and of others who may be asked to collaborate with them. These are not full minutes of the meeting, and in order to gain time, the texts have not all been submitted for correction to the speakers quoted.

Furthermore, the Report supposes knowledge of the background of the Group and of the history leading up to its creation. For the convenience of those who are not familiar with this history, certain texts have been added as Annexes.

The Report includes the following:

- 1) The Programme.
- 2) The List of Participants.
- 3) Notes of the talk given by Father Thomas Stransky.
- 4) Notes of the two introductions to the discussion on "Study Themes":
 - Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo.
 - Marga Bührig.
- 5) A few points from the general discussion.
- 6) Group reports: "The contribution of women in social change"
(Notes from Maria Meersman)
"Women in the renewal of the Church"
(Notes from Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo).
- 7) Practical Conclusions.

Annex A : Press Release published in the Ecumenical Press Service,
Geneva, 19 December, 1968.

Annex B : Recommendations concerning the creation of the WELG adopted by
the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches
and the Roman Catholic Church.

Annex C : Extract from "Before Taizé" by Dr Madeleine Barot (Introduction
to the Report of the Women's International Ecumenical Conference
organized at Taizé, June 19-24, 1967 by the Conference of
Catholic International Organizations and the WCC Department on
Cooperation of Men and Women in collaboration with the World
YWCA).

Annex D : Text of the letter addressed from the meeting of the WELG to the
Co-Chairmen of the WCC-RCC Joint Working Group.

May I say again how happy we were in Rome to welcome this - long awaited -
first "exploratory" meeting of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group!

Rosemary Goldie
Rosemary Goldie

WOMEN'S ECUMENICAL LIAISON GROUP

ROME : 11 - 13 December, 1968

Place: Istituto Maria Rimoldi, Via Teulada 28, ROME - Tel. 355.700

Co-Chairmen: Dr. Marga BÜHRIG (WCC) and Miss Maria VENDRIK (RCC)

P R O G R A M M E

Wednesday, December 11th

- 5.00 p.m.- : OPENING SESSION:
7.30 p.m. : "The General Context of Women's Ecumenical Work at World Level": a) History; b) Personnel and Structures.
(WCC : Dr. Barot and Miss Bam. RCC : Miss Goldie and Miss Bellosillo).
8.00 p.m. : Dinner

Thursday, December 12th

- 9.00 a.m. : SESSION: "Present situation and current trends of the ecumenical movement": Introductory statement by Rev. Thomas Stransky, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.
Discussion.
11.30 a.m. : Mass at the Catacombs of Priscilla, celebrated by Father Stransky
1.30 p.m. : Lunch
3.30 p.m.- : SESSION: Studies to be undertaken: Introductory talks
5.30 p.m. : by Dr. Bührig and Miss Pintasilgo.
and
6 - 7.30 : General discussion.
8.00 p.m. : Dinner, to which friends were invited.

Friday, December 13th

- 9.00 a.m. : Worship, led by Mrs. Athena Athanassiou.
9.30 - 11.00 a.m. : WORK GROUPS
11.30 a.m.- :
1.00 p.m. : Reports from groups. Discussion.
1.30 p.m. : Lunch.
3.00 - 5.00 p.m. : CLOSING SESSION: Conclusions.

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PRESENT SITUATION AND CURRENT TRENDS IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Notes from talk by the Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. of the
Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity

We need constantly to look again to see if various developments are contributing or not to the progress of the Ecumenical Movement. What follows are just personal reflections which are intended to provoke your own. We have no need to "sell" each other on basic commitment to the Ecumenical Movement.

I should like to raise a few questions:

1. Is the Ecumenical Movement slowing down?

If it is not halting, is it at least beginning to wobble on the way? Is the prematurely old man already burdened with arthritis and thinning blood? Or is this giant of a child only taking its first self-supporting steps?

For 5 or 6 years, it has been an "in" Movement. It was popular to be ecumenical. The problem is to see that this enthusiasm without depth does not die out before it can be deepened. We need deep commitment with enthusiasm.

I suggest that the slack in ecumenical pace is due not to a misunderstanding of the Movement, but to a realization of what it is; more, of what it demands of Christians and their Churches. The steps of ecumenism are unsteady because of a fear of what we are walking into.

In the first period, there has been enthusiasm especially about theological discussion. There is no fear of theological discussion (theologians always talk!), although rigorous intellectual analysis is often sadly lacking.

There is no fear, either, of commitment to erasing prejudices and suspicions, to mutual understanding and esteem. This is a blessing, to be sure. Most of us have inferiority complexes ^{because we} and do not understand our neighbours.

The first step: Ecumenical life begins only when one recognizes the other as a real servant of Christ, and the other Churches as Christian instruments of the Holy Spirit. HOW ARE WE TO GET PEOPLE INTO THIS EXPERIENCE?

The second step is spiritual care for one another. It means being interested not only in what the other thinks, but in helping him to become a better Christian, and in his helping us to become better Christians. It is because we realize this that we are becoming frightened.

True ecumenism depends on the relationship between mission, reform and unity. This was clear in Uppsala. The formula is UNITY FOR MISSION THROUGH CHURCH RENEWAL.

Fear comes from seeing the formula as a whole, or from the consequences of taking only one of the three terms seriously. There are people who speak only about

unity; this can tend to churchy narcissism, the cooperative enlargement of the Christian ghetto. Others speak only of reform, but for what? - They lack mission consciousness and purpose, and can tend to "change-for-change's-sake". Others, again, are interested in mission and reform for their own Church but are afraid when this is related to other Churches in a movement towards ecclesial unity.

More and more it is being seen that THE MOVEMENT IS OF PEOPLE AND OF LIVING COMMUNITIES. It is not just an affair of abstract ideas and documents. It is a movement of people who are burdened and blessed by their histories. If we look to see how people are reacting, we see that a "generation gap" has formed. There are TWO ECUMENICAL GENERATIONS. This has very little to do with age. A new ecumenical generation has been formed because between 1961 and 1964 a different type of person became interested for the first time in the Ecumenical Movement. This type of person thinks differently from the pioneers. He is not interested in the old difficulties which they faced. The focus is different. The "younger" ecumenical generation may be freer for what can actually be done at this time. We find this "gap" in all Churches. We must remember, however, that young revolutionaries themselves age. The "aggiornamento" cries of one generation sound hollow in the next. (In Uppsala, Margaret Mead reminded the Assembly that anyone over forty is an "immigrant" into the 1960's.)

2. Has the Movement already become over-institutionalized, or at least institutionalized according to patterns already out of date?

Any movement, even of revolution or return to the Middle Ages, gradually acquires an institutional shape. The Ecumenical Movement is now an institution. This supposes a pattern of thinking and acting, and also a certain note of authority. People are opting out of the Movement because of its institutionalization, and the reaction against institution is connected with the reaction against authority. At times, people are critical of ecumenical structures because they do not have enough authority - there are even Protestants who want to give more authority to the Pope than we do. They complain because he does not intervene in local problems, especially when local solutions may put the Protestants and ecumenical-minded Catholics at a disadvantage.

Today, authority is being judged more and more on its relevance rather than on its source. People do not ask: Who said it?, so much as: Is what is said relevant?

Rather than a "crisis of authority", I prefer to speak of a crisis of community and a crisis of freedom in community. The question is: How can I be free in community without destroying the rights and freedoms of others? The question is the same, whether the community is the family, the university, the United Nations, an old nation, a new nation, or the Church.

There is dissent in the community today precisely in order that the community (the Church) may grow through mature self-criticism and self-evaluation. But how is criticism to be made mature? We need holy judgement and patient

discernment. It is immature to expect maturity of the immature, and many of us are immature. Since there must be dissent, there must be some immature dissent; if that upsets us, we are immature.

How can the rank and file members of the Church, the "average Christian layman" (did you ever meet one?) become responsibly involved in the controversial issues of the Churches, and so of the Ecumenical Movement, in such a way that the result is greater community and not more schism? In the Roman Catholic Church especially, many are seeing self-criticism for the first time in the controversial issues. There is pressure towards silent schism because of immaturity on all sides.

How can we involve members of the Church in responsible self-criticism in such a way that the result is greater unity for mission through reform?

Reaction to dissent: There is a counsel of caution and consolidation, rather than further advance, because of the fear of new horizontal schism in and among the Churches.

Has the movement become too institutionalized according to old patterns? Movement involves time, but we have different clocks. What do we mean when we say we are going too slow or too fast? (We could compare the ecumenical situation here to the racial situation. When the white man says "We need time", the black man may say "My clock runs faster".) Some people feel that the movement is too slow because it is being strangled by the cautious, official and institutional leadership of ecclesiastics.

The third step: Fundação is compared to a horse that gallops up to an obstacle and then shirks the jump.

What is asked for now is ecumenical decision-making, not just mutual interest and mutual concern. The World Council of Churches Youth Department now has a motto "No more consultation without implementation". We do not want talk and more talk, with no action, unless it be the action of organizing more talks. "Cheques are already written, but the Churches refuse to cash them".

Is there not, also, an over-institutionalization of studies? We have series of better and better documents but the new people coming into the movement do not know the old documents. They have not gone through the process.

Has all this material been digested? Are the documents just instruments to produce more documents - or rather, instruments for people who are forced either to make decisions or to avoid making them?

3. Do the non-Roman Churches, the inter-Church Councils and the Roman Catholic Church have the right ecumenical structures to be instruments and reflections of the ecumenical movement?

We know the famous formula: "We should do all things together, unless theological conscience obliges us regretfully to do one thing separately." Has not this become too much a motto and not enough a working principle?

The formula needs also to be qualified. We have to be sure that the things we do together are the right things. Otherwise, we are putting unity before mission and reform. Perhaps we should all together stop doing that particular thing that we were doing separately. We may be sharing one another's weak points. Lay organizations, and women's organizations, may also need to be re-evaluated. Do they make sense for mission and reform at this time?

Some ecumenical structures have never been completely ecumenical. They represent only one part of the Christian tradition. This is not their fault. Many structures which were originally ecumenical are becoming anti-ecumenical because they are over-burdened with Protestant tradition. Courage is needed to tear down and build up again. In some places, the present ecumenical structures may be the greatest obstacle to unity for mission.

4. How does the decision-making process change when the Roman Catholic Church faces a Council of Churches?

The World Council of Churches, or a National Council of Churches, only indirectly represents the Churches. Any decision has to be submitted to the Churches for action. The Roman Catholic Church or a National Bishops Conference is more directly involved. In some structures, Roman Catholic Church membership could even endanger full commitment to the ecumenical movement. Especially on the international level, the Roman Catholic Church because of its structure of authority can move more quickly than any other Church or Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches is doing more with the Roman Catholic Church, a non-member Church, than it can do with many of its member-Churches. But within the Roman Catholic Church there is a certain reaction after the Second Vatican Council, a reaction of fear and anxiety, and therefore a slowing-up of decisions at the international level. The present mood in the Vatican is more defensive than it has been for the last ten years. We must not be too optimistic about the Holy See's pushing forward on international ecumenical issues for the next 4 or 5 years. The best approach may be, not to work specifically at the international level, but to use international structures in order to keep things moving at local, national and regional levels, and through them to put holy pressure on "higher authorities".

STUDY THEMES - A

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo

I have been asked to identify themes for study to be undertaken, starting from research which has already been done, meetings which have already taken place, from our own discussions here, and from my personal experience. I cannot identify isolated subjects, for it seems to me that the question as a whole needs to be rethought.

1. (a) The historical survey yesterday revealed a certain dialectical movement since the first ecumenical meetings for women at the international level. At Vicarello, the starting-point was forms of service for women in the Churches. This led to questions concerning ecumenical education, attitudes and ecumenical activities for women. At Crêt-Bérard, there are still these two lines of approach, whereas at Taizé, the essential thing is the discovery of an ecumenism expressed in the life of the whole People of God.

(b) At Vicarello, it was pointed out that the group is a study-group rather than an operational one, whereas at Crêt-Bérard there is an effort to determine a joint project, and at Taizé all possible projects are enumerated before coming back again to study themes which are considered of primary importance at the international level (Res. VII).

(c) At Vicarello, discussion is about service in the Churches; at Crêt-Bérard, about presence in the world. At Taizé, we come again to the conclusion that women could make a more effective contribution to the Churches' mission if they had their place in structures for reflection, decision and pastoral care.

This dialectical process is not exclusive to these meetings. It is inherent in everything concerning women in today's world.

2. Personally, and in consideration of the changing society in which we are living, I should be inclined to give first place to the question of women's contribution to social change. The time has gone by for raising the question in static terms of "woman's role in society". But we have to ask what women can do to bring about social change:

- Social change through dynamic commitment in the under-privileged countries;
- Social change integrating technical civilization into ancient cultures (Asia);
- Social change in situations of violence;
- Social change in an affluent society, where we may have to adopt radical solutions to stop the mechanism, if we are not to become robots;
- Social change in socialist countries, where inventiveness and creativity must be stimulated, for example through new and flexible forms of leisure-time activity (cf. the Enquiry launched by the Polish review "ZNAK").

3. The first term of our dialectic is therefore: What can women do today? But it leads to another: Who are women? What awareness do they have of their condition as women? If we look at the subjects proposed at the meetings of Vicarello, Crêt-Bérard and Taizé, we see that women still feel the need of finding their rightful place. We need only recall, moreover, the endless flow of literature on woman to realize that this question is everywhere in the air. The questions raised may be expressed in any number of limited and more concrete forms but they all converge into two main lines:

- an anthropological line: What does it mean to be a woman? The question must be studied from the two-fold standpoint, philosophical and theological.
- a sociological line: How does a woman become a woman? Which are the social conditionings, the cultural environment, the civilization, by which she is fashioned? (cf. Harvey Cox's analysis of "The Girl" in "THE SECULAR CITY").

From a more practical standpoint, the questions raised at Taizé belong rather to this category (the single woman; the family in the new social context; voluntary work versus professional work, etc.). This introspection cannot however find its solution in itself. It can only have meaning as part of a dynamic process. This brings us back again to the first term of the dialectic: I can only know who I am when I try to live, to move, to contribute to social change.

4. As Christian women, we want to be like other Christian women, living members of our Churches. How? I should like to follow a line of reasoning analogous to that we have just been following. Here again, there are two dialectically related terms, and here again I give priority to the one which contains within itself the whole movement: the contribution of women to change, to renewal in the Churches. What matters is to find the innumerable forms which are not only possible but already existing; to let the scales drop from our eyes and see the possibilities which are offering; to invent, to create, to keep on trying with that patience with which woman is said to be highly endowed...

Naturally, the second question arises: Who are we in the Church? Already, at Vicarello, this question had been discussed at some length. Again I seek help from the two instruments:

- biblical anthropology, especially as it is revealed to us in deeply evangelical women;
- the religious sociology of women. What are the conditions created in the Churches by the other members and reinforced perhaps by women? (I want to stress that the ordination of women, which has priority in the claims made by certain Catholic women at the present time, seems to me to be a very secondary aspect of a wider problem.)

Here again, this second term brings us back to the first. We can only know who we are in the Church by trying to contribute to the ongoing activity of

the Church. This frees us also from the need to worry about escaping from masculine or clerical domination. We just keep on our way, doing what needs to be done, and our way is leading somewhere.

5. In what I have said, there are suggestions enough for joint action by Christian women. But the particular moment through which we are living in the ecumenical movement raises concrete questions. On the one hand, there is necessity of ecumenical awareness, of ecumenical education at grass-roots level. On the other hand, we might say that the ecumenical movement between Churches is almost a thing of the past. The real divisions occur now within each community - between rich and poor (the whole tragedy of the 77 since UNCTAD); between white and black; between adults and youth; between conservatives and progressives; between West and East. This has two consequences:

(a) There are more and more Christians who are "marginal" in relation to the communities from which they have come. What is to be done? How is it to be done?

(b) There is a tendency to establish links within an inter-confessional community, without any special tie to one or another Church.

6. A final point. It seems to me that what most of the Christian Churches are experiencing at the present moment is closely bound up with Western civilization, with the political system underlying it, and with the economic power derived from it. We shall have overlooked a whole group of Christians who cannot fail to call into question some of our categories, if we do not make a decided effort to include in our study Christian women from Eastern Europe. In them we may find the bridge we need in order some day to understand the orientals of Asia.

STUDY THEMES - B

Marga Bührig

I have been asked to outline the study projects of the World Council of Churches which afford some possibility for WCC-RCC collaboration through our group. Three sectors may be distinguished:

- 1) Studies undertaken by the Department of Cooperation between Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, and developed through Seminars organized by the Department in different parts of the world.

The Department has its own philosophy, and its theological view, of what it means for men and women to live "vis-à-vis" in such a way that they contribute effectively to the fullness of the Church and of life in society. The principles on which the work of the Department is based are accepted by many; but the practical result has not been too encouraging. The structures have not changed. There is not much use in stimulating study in this field unless action and structural change result. We have to find new points of entry into the structures of the Churches. But, experience shows that there will not be much change simply through the entry of women into old structures of ministry. The whole question must be considered within the general context of society and of change in society, and bearing in mind the necessary variety of ministries.

- 2) The Fourth Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Uppsala, adopted a project of coordinated studies on Humanum: What makes man to be man - The new humanity - The humanity of Christ.

The world is by no means just "given by God" to the extent that we had thought. What kind of man in what kind of society are we working for? What do we mean by "missionary participation in human institutions"? What does it mean that man is "created in the image of God"? - in terms of sonship, of partnership, of domination?

A co-ordinator is to be appointed for the studies on Humanum, and collaboration is to be sought from other groups.

What are the points we would like to see studied?

- 3) The question of mixed marriages.

In replies to the questionnaire launched in preparation for the meeting at Taizé, no other point was so often quoted. What was stressed was the point of view of the reality actually lived by the couples concerned, the possibilities of common witness and service, and the need for pastoral care.

A FEW POINTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

(Presented without any special order)

Brigalia Bam : How can we work really as a world group? - Should we perhaps concentrate on certain regions? - On "conscientious living in the world of today", according to different regions?...

Margaret Shannon : The problem is how to equip women for real responsibility in the urgent tasks of society. Women's capacity for taking responsibility in long-range projects is often doubted.

It is true that social change is the responsibility of "all human beings" (a remark made by Maria Meersman), but we are not charged with discussing the contribution of all human beings. We have to see how we can stimulate the contri bution of women, and we must be careful that study does not paralyse action (cf. Father Stransky).

The primary issue is not man/woman, but rich/poor, black/white... We must find situations where women can be effective. How are we to work effectively with men in the different professions? Perhaps we could suggest pilot projects in various societies, e.g. how women effect urban societies in the U.S.A.

As regards ecumenical education, valuable material has been prepared in the U.S.A. by the National Councils of Catholic Women and of Catholic Men (e.g. TV programmes, ecumenical kits).

One way in which women's organizations may be condemned is because as organized women we have confined our activity too much to listening and study... We don't know whether we believe or don't believe. We need open, ecumenical communities and confrontation with unbelievers in the Church.

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo : With regard to social change, we must be careful not to overlook what has been done by secular bodies; e.g. the UNESCO study on women in engineering.

Father Stransky : The present concern with development will cause a serious, but a good crisis in the Churches. We discover that we are more confident of our techniques than of our faith. We need to take more seriously the problem of unbelief in the Churches. The crisis of faith is also a crisis of culture.

GROUP REPORT : "THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL CHANGE"

(Notes from Maria Meersman)

1. Why the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group is concerned about this aspect of the world today.

We see our task as giving help to our Churches to bring about better ecumenical understanding and education.

Our Churches have committed themselves in the question of international development and justice (the encyclical "Populorum progressio"; the Pontifical Commission "Justice and Peace"; SODEPAX; the Uppsala Assembly, etc.). We want to put at the service of this commitment the resources, the channels, the possibilities we see as a women's group. It is not so much a matter of a specific contribution as women, but rather providing new channels and possibilities for this commitment of our Churches.

2. The Group proposes to explore what is already being done in this field by Christian women on an ecumenical basis.

This would mean approaching Christian organizations and Christian women committed in secular organizations. After a short introduction explaining why we are concerned about this aspect, we could add some questions:

- Are Christian women actively present in the social changes taking place today? In which fields? In what kind of responsibilities? What is their contribution? Is there any ecumenical cooperation in this field?
- If not, what are the reasons why they are not present as women? As Christian women? On an ecumenical basis?
- How are movements and organizations stimulating their members, and women in general, to make a contribution in social changes - in all countries, developed and developing, on the international as well as on the local level?

As a second step, we could send out a more elaborate questionnaire, drawn up with the help of experts.

GROUP REPORT : "WOMEN IN THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH"

(Notes from Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo)

A new place for woman in a renewed Church supposes:

- giving expression to all the consequences of Baptism;
- recognition of woman on the part of the Church;
- responsibility with a view to the fullness of the Church.

The work group suggests:

- 1) At regional level: An analysis of the different situations: preparatory study with a view to regional seminars, perhaps jointly organized by the Laity Council and the World Council of Churches.
- 2) At international level:
 - a) Documentation.
 - b) Current projects (WCC, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations).
 - c) An international meeting.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

At the close of the meeting, the Group took the following decisions:

- 1) Co-Chairmen: (On a motion presented by Margaret Shannon) Marga Bührig and Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo were elected Co-Chairmen until the next meeting.
- 2) Letter of presentation: The Co-chairmen will draft a letter presenting the Group: its nature, terms of reference and immediate plans. The draft will be sent to all members of the Group for their remarks and suggestions. The final text will be sent to international organizations concerned, and, where necessary, to national organizations. Groups will be asked for information on ecumenical work.
- 3) A calendar will be drawn up of meetings and events of interest from the standpoint of women's ecumenical collaboration. Brigalia Bam and Pilar Bello-sillo will collaborate to implement this project.
- 4) World Day of Prayer (First Friday in March): Margaret Shannon will approach the committee for the World Day of Prayer, to see how national committees can be stimulated to seek greater Roman Catholic participation.
- ✓ 5) The Group will formally recommend to the WCC-RCC Joint Working Group that, in the reorganization of the JWG consideration be given to the inclusion of women as members. Rosemary Goldie will write on behalf of this Group to the Co-Chairmen of the JWG. (See text of letter enclosed).
- 6) Where necessary, other people may be co-opted to take part in studies and meetings of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group.
- 7) The next meeting of the Group will be prepared by Brigalia Bam in agreement with the two Co-Chairmen. Tentative dates: May 5-8, 1969.

It was further suggested, although no formal decision was taken, that -
in addition to the collection of bibliography - the co-chairmen should
develop an analytical study of relevant material published about women.

me!!

Press Release : Ecumenical Press Service

No. 46 - 19th December, 1968.
(Geneva)

JOINT WCC/ROMAN CATHOLIC WOMEN'S
GROUP HOLDS EXPLORATORY TALKS

Rome, (EPS) — The Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches held its first meeting here December 11-13.

Composed of five women named by the Roman Catholic Laity Council and five designated by the WCC's Division of Ecumenical Action, the new committee had been formed at the behest of the Joint Working Group to explore ways in which women might participate in ecumenical co-operation.

The women voted to give priority to projects that would further the renewal of the Church, education for ecumenical action, and Christian unity. They set as their first topic for discussion "Christian Women Together for Social Change".

Before formulating a programme, however, they will gather information on the ecumenical groups already in existence and the areas in which they are working. They will also compile a bibliography of all recent studies on the role of women in the Church. It is hoped that this material can be ready for the next meeting, tentatively set for May 1969.

In addition, it was agreed that Roman Catholic representatives will be invited to regional conferences and seminars sponsored by Protestant women's groups and vice versa. Programme calendars will be exchanged, as well as information about joint observances of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and women's World Day of Prayer.

Co-Chairmen of the Rome meeting were Miss Maria Vendrik of the Netherlands (RCC); and Dr. Marga Bührig, Switzerland, Reformed, for the WCC.

Other members of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Committee present were:

Roman Catholic Church:

Miss Maria del Pilar Bellosillo, Spain; Mrs. Marianne Dirks, Germany; Miss Maria Meersman, Belgium; Miss Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Portugal, living in Paris; (Ex officio: Miss Rosemary Goldie).

World Council of Churches:

Mrs. Athena Athanassiou-Tsouderos, Greece, Orthodox; Mrs. Liselotte Nold, Germany, Lutheran; Dr. Margaret Shannon, USA, Presbyterian; Deaconess Elizabeth Souttar, United Kingdom, Church of England; (Ex officio: Dr. Madeleine Barot, France, Reformed; Miss Brigalia Bam, South Africa, Anglican).

Recommendations agreed upon by the WCC-RCC Joint Working Group

- 1) Crêt-Bérard, November 1966: Following on the ecumenical Consultation held at Vicarello and in Rome, October 1965, under the joint sponsorship of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the WCC Department on Cooperation of Men and Women, the JWG adopted the following recommendation:

"The Joint Working Group recommends to the authorities of the RCC and the WCC the appointment of a joint group of ten representing the women of the Churches, five from either side, to be responsible for keeping in touch with, and coordinating, plans which are now developing for common study and action by Christian women on social questions."

- 2) Assisi, December 1967:

"That the Joint Group of ten representing the women of the Churches, proposed by the JWG in November 1966, be set up as soon as possible in an exploratory capacity. It is hoped that the Laity Council will take early action in this matter."

- 3) Rome, December 1968:

"The JWG received a report on the appointment of the "Women's Liaison Group" and expressed appreciation that this Group can now begin to meet. It re-iterates, however, its earlier recommendation that this Group be regarded as an exploratory instrument. The arrangement will have to be reviewed in due course in the light of developing relations between the Laity Council and the DEA."

"Before Taizé"

Dr. Madeleine Barot

(The historical summary given below is taken from the introduction to the Report of the Women's International Ecumenical Conference organized at Taizé, June 19-24, 1967, by the Conference of Catholic International Organizations and the WCC Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in collaboration with the World YWCA.)

... Prior to this Conference two smaller meetings had taken place, also attended by members of different Christian traditions. The first one, held at Vicarello (near Rome) was organised during the Vatican Council by the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity and the Department on Cooperation of the World Council of Churches. This Conference drew up a list of current questions concerning the place of women in Church and Society, which were to be jointly studied by the different women's organizations, in the hope of achieving, unanimity and taking joint action on the urgent needs of our time.

- How do women regard their role as wives, mothers and workers? How does society regard their role? How does the Bible see it? What does the Church teach about it?
- In our changing societies how can women make their maximum contribution to the life and work of church and society? As married, single, as members of a religious order?

The following studies were specially recommended:

- a re-assessment of the role of the single woman and a deeper understanding of celibacy;
- the changing role of the married woman in full-time and part-time work and in voluntary service, in the light of her home and family commitments and responsibilities;
- new opportunities for women, once their children have grown up and they are free to work outside the home;
- openings to give possibilities for women to serve within the different churches;
- women's contribution to the development of theology;
- the ways in which women can help to create a climate in which unity can be effected.

:/.:

The second meeting, held at Crêt-Bérard in 1966, was organised by the World Council of Churches' Department on Cooperation, jointly with the Conference of International Catholic Organizations. It was marked by the conviction that joint witness and service between Christians of different denominations are valid only if they are the fruit of a deeper spiritual life, a realisation that they share the same vocation in Christ who is their common Lord. It was therefore decided that, parallel with the study of questions concerning the responsibility of Christian women in the world today, the women's organizations must be encouraged to participate actively in the general ecumenical dialogue in its different aspects.

A questionnaire was drawn up and widely distributed during the winter of 1966-1967. Its purpose was to make local groups think. Hundreds of replies were received from five continents, forming an interesting documentation on the present state of ecumenical relations among the members of the Christian women's organizations. It must be borne in mind, however, that the only groups which replied were already prepared to consider the ecumenical dialogue as important.

The Conference at Taizé in 1967 examined the results of this questionnaire, tried to evaluate the ecumenical situation shown in the replies, and drew up recommendations destined to help the national and local groups:

1. to promote the ecumenical education of their members;
2. to take the necessary initiative to ensure that the ecumenical dialogue passes out of the hands of specialists and is taken over by ordinary lay Christians at the local parish level;
3. to make Christian women realise that their vocation in the world today is not merely towards their blood-relations but to all their fellow-men (their brothers and sisters in the Christological sense);
4. through knowing each other better, to bring about a renewed sense of service within social communities where women's organisations exist side by side.

The Conference-programme therefore raised two issues: first, the conditions for the ecumenical dialogue as such; second, the many responsibilities of women in the world today and the conditions for joint witness and action between the Christian women's organisations...

Text of the letter addressed, on behalf of the Group, on December 16th, to the Co-Chairmen of the RCC-WCC Joint Working Group: Bishop Willebrands and Dr. E. Carson Blake.

Dear Dr. Blake,

As you know, the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group held its first meeting in Rome from December 11-13 last. Dr. Marga Bührig of the World Council of Churches and Miss Maria Vendrik of the Laity Council acted as Co-Chairmen.

In due course, a report on this - essentially "exploratory" - meeting and its results will be made to the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches through the WCC Division of Ecumenical Action and the Council on the Laity.

In the meantime, as Secretary of the meeting, I have been instructed to communicate as rapidly as possible to yourself and to Bishop Willebrands, as Co-Chairmen of the Joint Working Group, the following recommendation:

That consideration be given to the inclusion of women as members of the new Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

With best personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Rosemary Goldie