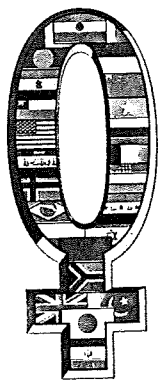


THE WAR AGAINST WOMEN



In much of the world, political and economic 'progress' has been dragging them backward

Twenty-five years ago, a band of militant women picketed the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, tossed bras, girdles and other "boob-girly symbols" into the trash and added an epithet (bra burners) and a rallying cry (women's liberation) to the English language. A quarter of a century later, few countries are without a women's movement; few governments are immune to women's demands. Traditional notions of a woman's place are eroding, and gender gaps are narrowing.

Yet much of the world is still waging war against women. In 1980, the

United Nations summed up the burden of inequality: Women, half the world's population, did two thirds of the world's work, earned one tenth of the world's income and owned one hundredth of the world's property. Fourteen years later, despite the fall of repressive regimes, a decade of high growth, the spread of market economics and the rise of female prime ministers and CEOs, women remain vic-

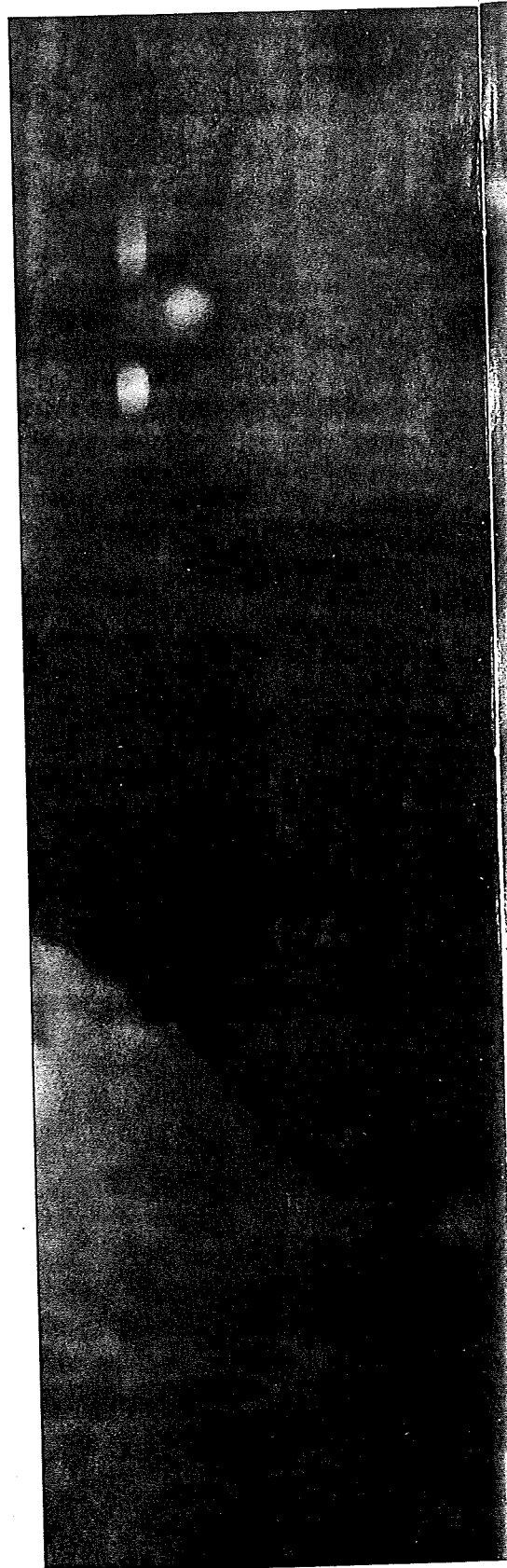
FIRST IN A SERIES

IN THIS ISSUE

UNITED STATES. Separate sisters
SOUTH AFRICA. The other revolt
INDIA. Dowries and death
RUSSIA. Sex and jobs

IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES

BRAZIL. Machismo rules
CHINA. A great leap backward
EGYPT. God versus women
JAPAN. Slow-motion rebellion
NORWAY. Politics and power



INDIA. A bride-burning victim. Communism

WORLD REPORT

tims of abuse and discrimination just about everywhere. The 1993 U.N. Human Development Report found that there still is no country that treats its women as well as its men.

Not only have the political and economic gains of the past decade not always benefited women; in many places "progress" has dragged them backward:

■ **Victims of freedom.** The collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union has thrown women out of work in disproportionate numbers, channeled them into second-rate jobs and revived prerevolutionary attitudes about a woman's place. Women applying for office jobs in the new Russia often are told that their duties include sleeping with the boss.

■ **Victims of democracy.** The new democratically elected assemblies of Eastern Europe have far fewer women members than their puppet predecessors did, and abortion rights are under fire in Germany, Poland and Romania.

■ **Victims of prosperity.** China's economy is growing at a double-digit clip, but most of the workers in the sweatshops that are helping to power the boom are women. And Beijing has subordinated women's health, employment and education needs to its goal of keeping the birthrate low.

■ **Victims of holy war.** Islamic militants are crusading against Western-style women's rights, issuing death threats against feminists and making headway even in traditionally tolerant Muslim lands such as Egypt.

■ **Victims of progress.** In China, India and other nations where sons are still valued



UNITED STATES. Critics charge that mainstream feminism hasn't done enough for women in poverty.

more highly than daughters, medical technology has provided a new means of disposing of unwanted baby girls.

■ **Victims of violence.** Despite the toppling of military dictatorships in Latin America, the deregulation of India's economy and the end of apartheid in South Africa, there has been no halt to what the U.N. has called "a global epidemic of violence against women."

■ **Victims of success.** In America and Western Europe, women have made great strides in politics and in some pro-

fessions. But even in Norway, where women now dominate the political scene, women are still hired last, fired first, paid less than men and held back from the top jobs. In America, a growing number of "separate sisters," including black women and other minorities, women in traditional "women's jobs" and both elderly and young women, charge that the feminist movement has ignored them and their concerns.

The collapse of communism, unlamented almost everywhere, has hurt women in unexpected ways. Gender equality was always more rhetorical than real under Marxism, but women have been hard hit by the implosion of old command economies, the end of guaranteed employment and the unraveling of the social safety net. In Russia, 70 percent of those laid off in the first two post-Communist years were women.

Birthrates in Russia and eastern Germany have dropped to all-time lows as benefits have evaporated and state-financed kindergartens have closed. Abortion rights are under fire in Germany and have been all but extinguished in Poland. In Romania, where abortion

was banned for 23 years, abortion rates have hit a global high and the Orthodox Church is pushing to restore the ban.

Even robust economic growth is no guarantee that women will prosper. In China, where Communists still rule but capitalism is taking command, women are no longer being hired for secure, benefit-buffered jobs in state enterprises. Instead, they are being channeled into jobs as secretaries, tour guides and hostesses, for which they dress in traditional, tight *cheongsams* with thigh-high slits. Prof.

Taxation without representation

More women are getting elected, but they still compose only 10 percent of all legislators

Note: Figures for selected countries are as of June 1993, and for the U.S. refer to women in the House of Representatives.

USN&WR—Basic data: Inter-Parliamentary Union

High	
Finland	39%
Norway	36%
Denmark	33%
Sweden	33%
Netherlands	29%
United States	11%
Low	
Kuwait	0
Mauritania	0
United Arab Emirates	0
Jordan	0
South Korea	1%
Pakistan	1%
Japan	2%
Turkey	2%
Nigeria	2%

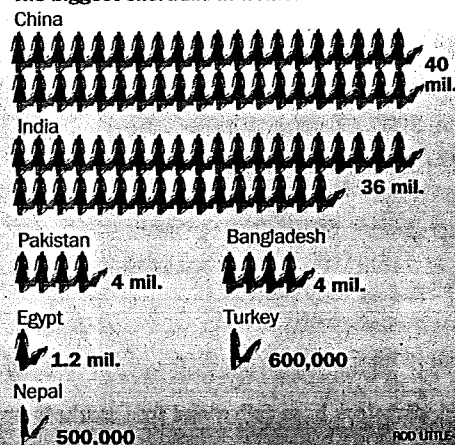
Share of parliament seats held by women

Missing women

In most countries, including the United States, women outnumber men. But in some countries, where females receive poorer nutrition and medical care than do males, there are fewer females than males.

USN&WR—Basic data: Stephan Klasen, Harvard University

The biggest shortfalls in women



NOO TITLE—USN&WR

ing thrust of the feminist movement.

The National Organization for Women is planning a national march against violence this summer while Congress considers a bill that would make violence against women a civil rights offense. But some prominent dissenters oppose making violence a priority because, like the drives against pornography and sexual harassment, it fosters "victim feminism."

While rape, harassment and battering hog the headlines, the vital issues for most women in most countries continue to be bread-and-butter ones. A recent survey by *Ms.* magazine found equal

crafts, does not even count as paid labor, and they rarely inherit or control property. Their burdens have eased somewhat as birth control has become widely available. Mothers are producing fewer children, but every year half a million women still die from pregnancy-related problems, including botched abortions.

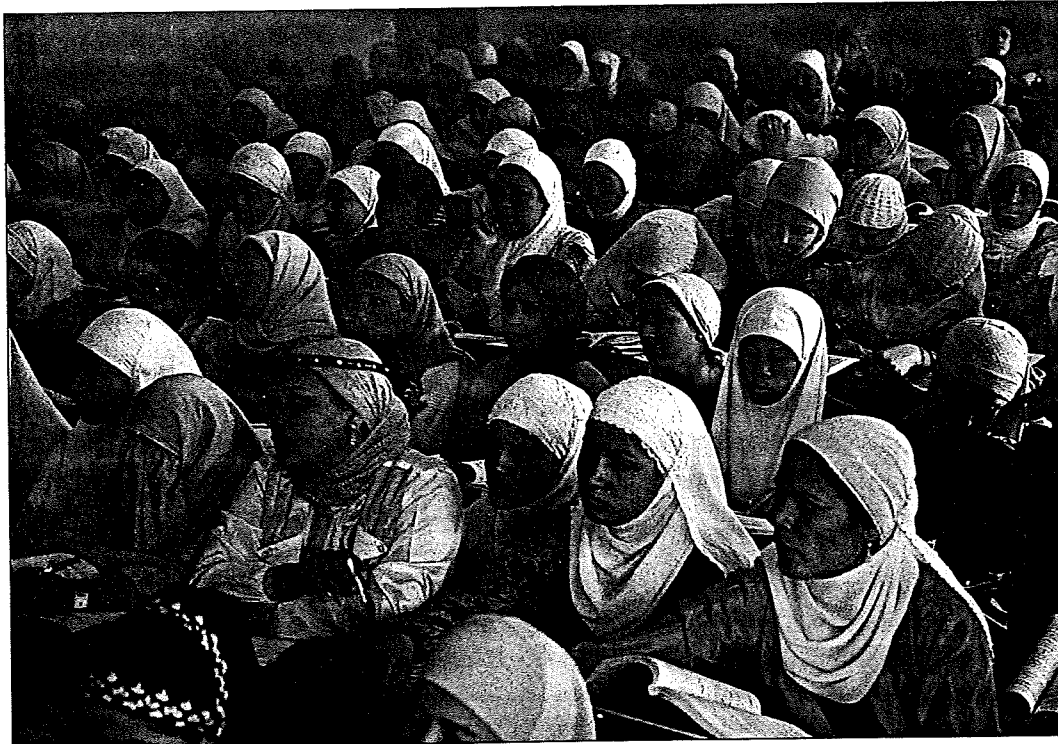
The other big shackle on poor women is illiteracy. Although the literacy gap is shrinking, two thirds of the world's illiterates are female; 600 million women cannot read, and 90 million school-age girls are not in school. Uneducated women everywhere have high birthrates, low

death from neglect is the main cause, but there are others. In China, many girls are not counted because their families hide them from the birth control police. Both Asian giants have traditions of female infanticide, which continues in small pockets. And now technology offers a modern alternative in the form of sex-selective abortions.

Even villagers have access to ultrasound machines that can detect the sex of a fetus in time for a late abortion. Selective abortion is producing a big deficit in newborn girls, but it also leaves feminists in a moral quandary: Can abortion-rights

advocates demand that limits be placed on a woman's right to choose? This dilemma may be the international abortion hot potato of the 1990s.

Now that American feminists are looking beyond abortion, their priorities may be more relevant to the forgotten women at home and overseas. Since feisty women tend to flourish best where speech is free, it may be that a rising tide of political and economic freedom eventually will lift women's boats, too. Russian women are beginning to meet in informal groups similar to those that coalesced into America's women's movement three decades ago. South African women are beginning to fight for equal rights now that majority rights are nearly won. In China, where



EGYPT. Segregated class: Islamic militants are crusading against Western-style women's rights.

pay and job discrimination the top concerns of American women.

More women are working: They do so in industrial nations at 77 percent of the men's rate in 1991, up from 59 percent 20 years earlier. But women's pay still averages two thirds of men's, mainly because women are clustered in low-wage "women's jobs." In the United States, year-round full-time working women earned 71 percent of the male wage in 1992, up from 62 percent a decade earlier. But women high school graduates earn slightly less than do men who dropped out of school before ninth grade.

Basic burdens. For poor women—and the majority of women are poor—needs are more basic: food, shelter, work. Third World women get nothing like equal pay. Most of their work, on family farms or

earnings and short lives. Yet even a few years of education for girls can be a magic bullet, leading to smaller, healthier families, less economic dependence and less vulnerability to abusive husbands.

Natural hardness has made females the majority in all Western countries and in most of the poorest. But nearly half the world's women live in countries where males are more numerous. In these places, as Harvard economist Amartya Sen points out, girls and women get less food and health care than their brothers and husbands and often die of neglect.

A measure of this extreme prejudice is the number of missing women. China and India together have 75 million fewer women than they should have, according to calculations by Harvard scholar Stephan Klasen. Premature

women are just raising their heads above the parapet, there was not even a word for feminism until a few weeks ago, when women academics in Beijing settled on *nuquanzhuyi*—"women's rightsism." Just in time, too, before regiments of women's rightsists descend on Beijing for the womanpower fest next year. ■

BY EMILY MACFARQUHAR WITH JENNIFER SETER,
SUSAN V. LAWRENCE IN BEIJING, ROBIN KNIGHT IN LONDON
AND JOANNIE M. SCHROF

☐ In conjunction with this cover package, U.S. News is hosting an electronic women's forum on CompuServe through April 3. Issues under discussion range from political rights to women in the workplace. For a free software sign-up kit for U.S. News Online, call CompuServe at (800) 510-4247.

■ WORLD REPORT

in six low-salaried fields; last year, the figure was 22 percent, according to U.S. Department of Labor statistics.

"One reason women earn so little money compared with men is that most women and men don't do the same job," says Ellen Bravo, executive director of 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women. "And the jobs women do pay less, mainly because women do them. Unfortunately, not all women's groups have seen this as a women's issue."

The women's movement has made

matic change for women," says Women Work! Executive Director Jill Miller. "The troubling thing about the survey is that it shows it's not really that way."

Karen Leidy, a single mother of two in Palestine, Texas, says that "for women in small towns, there just aren't a whole lot of options" and that the concerns of big-city feminists aren't relevant to her. After her divorce three years ago, Leidy didn't want to leave Palestine, where relatives can help her care for her children, so she spent six months looking for work. Her choices ranged from a fast-food restaurant to a plastics factory.

with women who have been successful, says Leslie Watson Davis, an independent consultant and former student organizer. "The initiative to make this happen came from the young women, not the established feminists," she says.

Numerous organizations are trying to address the issues they feel have been ignored by most mainstream feminists. From El Paso, Texas—where La Mujer Obrera organizes Hispanic working women—to Washington, D.C., where the Older Women's League lobbies for 63 million women over 45, these groups claim they are the real women's move-

ment. "The mainstream feminists can help shape the debate," says Leah Wise, executive director of Southerners for Economic Justice in North Carolina. "But I don't think they're going to start organizing working women."

Some issues, such as child care, may require a new approach. "It's no solution to come up with alternatives and institutions that require hiring low-paid women at impoverished wages to take care of high-paid women's children," says Ellen Carol DuBois, co-author of *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*. While economic necessity has forced many women to work outside the home, the United States still lags behind many other developed nations in providing child care and other assistance to working mothers.

Now the grass-roots women's groups hope to produce a "fourth wave" of the American feminist movement that would embrace everyone from Hillary Rodham Clinton to Annie Williams, 37, a former welfare mother in Atlanta who now holds a \$20,000-a-year job at the Black Women's Wellness Center. Williams's daughter Natale is an honor-roll student in the 11th grade aiming for a career in medicine. Williams credits much of her family's progress to the Wellness Center, which helped her find education and child-care programs. "Most women think, 'What's the use even trying?'" she says. "Until I got in with this empowerment group, I didn't even know you could do such a thing." ■

BY MONIKA GUTTMAN IN LOS ANGELES WITH DAN MCGRAW IN FORT WORTH AND JILL JORDAN SIEDER IN ATLANTA



New York nurses protest layoffs. Women are still crowded into traditionally low-salaried jobs.

pay equity a priority for years, but the notion that those doing "women's work" should be compensated as well as those doing traditionally male jobs has been a hard sell in a sluggish economy. One consequence: Labor Department statistics show that women now earn 71 percent of what men do, compared with 64 percent in 1952.

Underpaid. Poverty also plagues women in much greater degree than it does men. Three out of 5 single mothers, whose ranks increased from 5.8 million in 1980 to 7.7 million in 1990, live in or near poverty, according to a study released last month by Washington, D.C.-based Women Work!, a training and advocacy organization for displaced homemakers and single mothers. Their median annual personal income: \$9,353. "The perception is that there's been dra-

Some women accuse feminist groups of a kind of elitism—or at best, benign ignorance. Lisa White, communications director of the Atlanta-based National Black Women's Health Project, which operates 150 self-help programs in 31 states, complains that other feminist groups tried to plan programs for black women with AIDS without seeking guidance from her organization. "We said, 'How can you possibly tailor programs for our needs if you're not even speaking with us directly or putting us on your steering committees?'" she recalls.

The twentysomething generation of women also complains of being ignored by its elders and has tried to create its own links. Young women in Washington, D.C., formed the Women's Information Network to bring young women who are just moving to Washington in contact

WORLD REPORT

rights in South Africa are activists schooled in protest politics by the anti-apartheid movement. In particular, women in the ANC have pushed that organization to embrace the concept of equal rights and to carry the commitment into the next government.

Policy vs. reality. In the past, the ANC mouthed the rhetoric of sexual equality while its top leaders remained all male and its women were relegated to the Women's League, which plays a supporting role. "The ANC leads the country on a policy level on gender issues," says Cheryl Carolus, one of the few women to head a major department in the organization, health and education. "But there is a dichotomy between the policy and the reality."

Women have been shaking up the ANC since July 1991, when it held its first legal conference inside South Africa after being unbanned the previous year. They asked that one third of the group's policy-making council be female, and when this was rejected they staged a walkout that embarrassed the men.

Now political power will change hands dramatically when a new government is inaugurated this year, presumably under the leadership of the ANC. Not only will it be largely black for the first time in history, it is expected to have a significant number of women, mainly as a result of an ANC decision to field a list of candidates that is one-third female.

"This time it wasn't even disputed when we said we wanted 33 percent," says Carolus. "The ANC is starting to grow up on the gender issue." ANC leader Nelson Mandela says the organization has recognized the fact that women make up 53 percent of South Africa's population. "Unless they play the role necessitated by their numbers, it will not be possible for us to achieve the ambition of building this country. That is why we acceded to their demand on the list."

Led by ANC activists, women from across the political and racial spectrum met in April 1992 to form the National Women's Coalition, whose mission was to draft a women's rights charter and agitate for change. The charter, adopted this month, demands equality "in all spheres of our lives." But the women know they are in for another battle. "Now it's a struggle against our men," says Albertina Sisulu, 76, a veteran activist and wife of Mandela's longtime colleague and prison mate Walter Sisulu. "But the women in this country are not keeping quiet."

BY JERELYN EDDINGS IN SOUTH AFRICA

RAGHU RAI—MAGNUM



THE ECHOES OF SITA

A lethal, age-old contempt for women persists

Fire is at the heart of Hindu ritual: It purifies, as in cremations, and it verifies virtue. The mythic paragon of Indian womanhood, the goddess Sita, walked through fire to prove her chastity to her husband, Rama. Widows used to demonstrate devotion by throwing themselves (or getting thrown) onto their husbands' funeral pyres. In the late 1970s, new echoes of Sita emerged. At first they appeared to be a rash of kitchen accidents in which careless wives dipped saris into cooking fires or were burned by exploding stoves. But as the immolations became more common, they caught the attention of feminist activists and began to be reclassified, first as suicides, then as murders.

Bride burnings are one product of the sometimes lethal synergy between



tradition and modernity. Another is the use of ultrasound to detect the sex of a fetus so that females can be aborted. Both practices are products of India's millennium-old contempt for women, and both are widespread in India today. What links them is the illegal but fast-spreading custom of providing

lavish dowries at weddings.

The connection is made with bumper-sticker simplicity in ads for ultrasound clinics: Spend 500 rupees today to save 50,000 rupees tomorrow. The cost of a sex-determination test, doctors are saying, is a fraction of what it would cost to marry off your unwanted girl child.

A similar profit-and-loss calculation is believed to be behind many of the bride burnings, also known as dowry deaths. A young wife whose dowry is considered

■ WORLD REPORT

TO BE YOUNG AND PRETTY IN MOSCOW

Careers often depend on cooking skills and sex

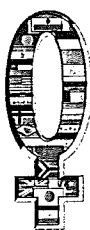
Jana Chervina went to her first job interview ready to field questions about her education. But her prospective employer had other ideas. "Are you a virgin?" he asked the stunned 19-year-old. When she shakily refused to answer, he heaped abuse. "With such complexes, you will never get a job," he warned. Then, trying to revive the offer, the company chief added, "You can have everything you want—a mink coat, a car—but you will have to sleep with everybody."

Moscow may be moving haltingly toward democracy and market economics, but coming of age female in the new Russia is often a dark rite of passage. The traditional paths through academic institutes or technical colleges after school are dead ends in an economy in which large enterprises are teetering near collapse. Government officials have declared that new jobs in the state sector will go to men. So young women flock to "commercial academies" where they are taught secretarial skills, languages and the basics of business for work in private enterprises. But competitive entry-level jobs often have strings attached.

As Russia's private businesses vie for contracts, sex sells. One television advertisement shows a young woman in a miniskirt sitting next to, but not using, a computer. A mellow male voice croons: "A woman is a businessman's best friend."

Help wanted. Russia's new business etiquette calls for secretaries to act as lures or serve as concubines. "I invite applications for secretary," begins a typical Moscow want ad. "Not older than 25; bright appearance, long legs compulsory." An ad for a secretary-housekeeper specifies a woman "without complexes, very communicative and full of sex appeal. She should cook delicious food and keep a good house. Her age: No older than 25."

Russia's small community of women's



rights leaders condemns such practices as sexual harassment, exploitation and discrimination. But young women facing tough choices in the workplace are largely without advocates. Government and business barely acknowledge the problem. Frustrated, Jana Chervina appealed to her mother, who complained to the executive, a commodities trader. "Were you born yesterday?" he shot back.

Irina Khakamada, one of Russia's best-known young businesswomen and a

Russia's democratic reformers are not battling to change their society's image of womankind. The Soviet state tried to control all spheres of behavior, and reclaiming one's private life became a way of resisting totalitarianism. Thus, many first-wave democrats consider a traditional hearth and home a human right that was long denied to the unisex Soviet citizen. They rejected communism's false claim of sexual equality, which heralded the female "tractor driver" but discriminated on wages and rarely welcomed women into the coveted ranks of the *nomenklatura*.

In the early days of *glasnost*, Mikhail Gorbachev spoke about the freedom of women to choose home and children. Many liberals hailed the joys of everyday life as a break with the Communist past, says Nadezhda Azhgikhina, an editor at the magazine *Ogonyok*. "I believed in the propaganda of the housewife, too," she admits. "I thought it was progressive."

But in the deepening divide between Russia's haves and have nots, women are losers. According to a recent World Bank study, Russian women get paid less than men for doing the same work and are often shunted into lower-skilled jobs. Seventy-one percent of Russia's unemployed are women, and the government's policy of giving men jobs first is hard on divorced women who are the breadwinners in their households.

Such inequities have given rise to informal women's groups that may, with time, coalesce into a more broad-based movement. The political party Women of Russia won 8.1 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections last December, shocking Russian democrats who considered the group a warmed-over version of the ineffectual Communist women's committee. But the strong showing was an important sign that Russian women will support women in politics who address bread-and-butter issues.

The consciousness of Russia's younger generation of women has yet to be raised, however. Taiya, a 20-year-old habitué of the Russkaya Troika nightclub, works at a joint venture where her job is clearly stated: to use her good looks to win contracts. At her boss's behest, she takes an exercise class three times a week, studies English and wears clothes that pass his muster. You have to be young and pretty to get a job in Moscow today, she explains. ■

BY VICTORIA POPE IN RUSSIA



RUSSIA. Street vendors; good jobs come with strings.

member of parliament, says she will push for legislation protecting women against sexual harassment. But even Khakamada isn't sure male bosses deserve all the blame. "A definite percentage of these girls accept such jobs in order to sell their bodies as expensively as possible under the image of a secretary, which is prestigious," she says. "They sell themselves not as street prostitutes, but get indirectly involved in this business."

Foreign feminists often liken Russia to the West in the 1950s, when women were largely stereotyped as helpmates. At the same time, feminists note, that era gave birth to contemporary Western feminism and launched the sexual revolution.