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WOMEN AND THE CHALLENGES  
OF THE 20th AND 21st CENTURIES

The First World War is perceived as the end of the “long” 19th century, a period rich in transformations. It opened a new era, also in the history of women. Thousands of men went to the front, leaving their work places and posts to women. The latter, in great numbers, filled factories, offices, banks, shops, and took up jobs so far reserved for males, such as tramway and bus conductors, workers in heavy industry, including munitions manufacturing, etc. When warfare finished, 4–5 years later, it became difficult to push these independent, trained women back into their households, although such attempts were made. As a result in 1921 in France 54% of women of an employable age worked outside their homes, in Great Britain — 35%, and in 1925 in Germany 48% were formally registered as working women. The numbers of working married women also grew considerably. In the inter-war period in England 10% of married women went to work, in 1925 in Germany 29%, and 34% in 1939, in 1931 in Italy 12%, and in France even more<sup>1</sup>.

This time also saw great transformations in mentality and customs, largely connected with the growing independence and professional activity of women. A new type of woman appeared, which even at first glance differed diametrically from those of the previous centuries. The creatures with long hair, wrapped in much clothing which frequently cramped their movements, changed into emancipated *garçonnes*, with hair cut short, in short skirts, liberated from their corsets, smoking in public, and who treated marriage and family as matters secondary to their professional career. This was connected with a revolution in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Higgonet et alii, eds., *Behind the Lines. Gender and the Two World Wars*, New Haven 1987.

sphere of sexual life. In 1929 the Dutchman Theodor van de Velde published a book which translated into all the languages was for several decades a guide in the life of young Europeans: *A Perfect Marriage*. He made men and women discover that the main aim of marriage is not procreation, but mutual sexual satisfaction (both of man and woman). The very fact that the subject was posed openly and became the topic of conversations, giving rise to the women's awareness that they also had a right to satisfactory sexual life, was a breakthrough which abolished the taboos created mainly by Victorian morals.

A great role in propagating a new type of woman and a new life-style was played by the cinema, the main medium that shaped the mass culture of the first half of the 20th century. The motion picture created the idols of new femininity: film stars — symbols of sex, such as Gloria Swanson, Marlena Dietrich, Rita Hayworth. At the threshold of the second half of the 20th century they were replaced by Brigitte Bardot and Marilyn Monroe. They symbolized femininity seen through the prism of sex, gained world renown and fascinated both men and women.

Naturally, the new customs and mental attitudes aroused not only enthusiastic acceptance but also sharp criticism. People were disgusted by the disappearance of differences between the sexes, complaints were heard about the downfall of morals, and the vanishing of traditional femininity was expected to produce disastrous results. Invective was directed against women who, like the suffragettes not long before, launched new models of life. E. F. Eberhard, a conservative German journalist, maintained in the 1920s that female activists generated evil of all kinds and questioned the basis of order and authority.

Despite the fact that in many countries women obtained voting rights, they did not play a major role in the politics of the first half of the 20th century. They had very small representation in European parliaments. Throughout the inter-war period in England only 36 women were MPs, most, for as many as 15, in 1931 (that is 2.5% of the whole House). In inter-war Poland women made up 2% of the Lower House and 5% of the Upper House of the Sejm. In the Finnish parliament women made up 9% of the House, in the Netherlands 7%. In the 1920s in Germany there were practically no women in the *Reichstag*, and from November 1933 onwards they totally lost the right to be elected.

However, the women's struggle to improve their living conditions (social insurance, pensions) was crowned with some successes. In Germany, women were granted the right to a widow's pension no earlier than 1911, in England in 1925. Slowly, the protection of women's labour was also introduced (prohibition of working at night, or in conditions harmful to health, reduction of working hours, guarantee of minimal pay), but its results were frequently disadvantageous to women. The "protection" law led to their discrimination on the labour market. Since the 19th century a great battle has been going on for the protection of maternity (protection of pregnant women, of mothers, paid maternity leave). Governments had a stake in this struggle, since they were interested in increasing the numbers of citizens. At the threshold of the 20th century at the International Congress concerning the situation and rights of women (Paris 1900), the Frenchwoman Marie Pognon proposed the creation of a state fund of assistance to children and mothers. *Le Conseil National des Femmes Françaises*, created in 1901, demanded recognition of maternity as a social task. Maternity leave lasting several weeks was introduced in the 1880s by Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands, in 1890 by England, in 1891 by Portugal, in 1892 by Norway, in 1900 by Sweden, in 1901 by Denmark, in 1902 by Italy, and in 1912 by Greece and Russia. Nevertheless, the situation of mothers, especially in the poor social strata, was very difficult<sup>2</sup>. This is testified by the descriptions of their work and life written by the women themselves (*Mein Arbeitstag, mein Wochenende*, Berlin 1930. *So leben wir...* Wien 1932).

Women's rights were at that time championed by many women's organizations in all European countries. They brought together women from intellectual, political and financial élites, especially a considerable group of writers, journalists and teachers. Organizations from individual countries joined to form bigger, international bodies — the women's movement became co-ordinated so that it could influence pan-European and world-wide socio-political associations. In 1923 a great Women's Congress took place in Vienna, attended by representatives of 70 countries, many from outside Europe. Apart from demands for the equal rights of both the sexes, the women's movement also

<sup>2</sup>G. Bock, *Frauen in der Europäischen Geschichte. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2000, p. 231 ff.

put forward more general postulates concerning vital socio-political problems; the most important of them was disarmament and the safe-guarding of peace. These postulates were connected with the growing threat created by the dictatorial regimes that were then emerging in Europe.

After the First World War the ideas of liberalism lost their persuasive power and what followed was a frequent departure from democracy. The systems of government changed in one country after another, and individual persons, or small groups coming to power started to execute it in a despotic way. The first in this movement was Russia, which in 1917 saw the emergence of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or in fact the rule of the Bolsheviks and their successive leaders: Lenin and Stalin. In Italy as a result of the fascist "March on Rome" Mussolini came to power (1922), in 1933 in Portugal Salazar's dictatorship started, and the same year Hitler came to power in Germany. Between 1936–39 Spain was governed by Gen. Franco, between 1936–41 Greece was ruled by Metaxas, in 1940 the dictatorial Vichy regime was created in France. All these regimes, marked by fascist ideology, had a very strong influence on the situation and life of women. While the progress of democratization in the 19th century produced — though with much delay — a gradual liberation of women, the dictatorial systems in most cases signified a failure of these processes.

The dictatorial countries propagated a cult of masculinity and patriarchal morals marked by a strong domination of men over women. Even the pronatalist policy led by the dictators put paternity before maternity. The practice of the dictatorial regimes concealed a paradox — they pushed women into the private sphere of the household — but at the same time created mass women's organizations in order to use females as instruments for their own goals. During Metaxas's dictatorship in Greece all females aged from 7 to 25 were mobilized in the youth organization *EON*, which promised them social and sexual integration. In Italy an organization of women sympathizing with fascism, the so-called *fasci femminili* was created, which towards the end of the 1930s numbered 750 thousand females<sup>3</sup>. In Franco's Spain the women's *Falanga*, preaching home and charitable work as the mission of women (the organization absorbed the old *Auxilio-so-*

<sup>3</sup> V. de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922–1945*, Berkeley 1992.

cial Union) numbered half a million members. In Salazar's Portugal the pro-regime *National Women's Union* was created, which embraced about 4% of the female population; there were also formed Salazar's unions of girls from 7–14 years of age. In Hitler's Germany, after old women's organizations such as *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereinen* and *Der Deutschen Staatsbürgerinnenverband* had been dissolved in 1933, there arose pro-regime organizations: *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* (almost 2 million members in 1935) and *Deutsche Frauenschaft* (in 1938 it numbered together with Austrian women 6 million members, that is 20% of the adult women in both countries). Apart from that there was *Der Bund Deutscher Mädel*, the membership of which was obligatory from 1936 and which was part of the *Hitlerjugend*. These organizations were to prepare women for their "feminine" tasks ascribed to them by Nazism, in keeping with the slogan of the three K's (*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*)<sup>4</sup>.

The dictatorship that departed most (but mainly on the surface) from the general model was the Bolshevik one. Theoretically, the Bolsheviks propagated a complete equality of rights for both the sexes, in practice, however, they pushed the women to the level of slave labourers. Initially the women that played an important part in the course of the Revolution (in 1917 women made up half of the workers in Russia) gained some privileges. In 1918 they were granted the right to 8 weeks of maternity leave with full pay and to a 6-hour working day for mothers, with breaks for feeding the child. However, the communist authorities soon started organizing a system of state upbringing of children in the state nurseries and kindergartens, thus destroying family life (e.g. they encouraged children to inform against their parents). The old traditional Russian brutal patriarchy reigned without any obstacles. The drinking habits of males favoured daily violence in the family. The shortages of supply on the market made the life of women especially hard and complicated; forced into exhausting work outside home they had to combine it with organizing the existence of their families in an extremely difficult situation. Their life was even more aggravated due to political

<sup>4</sup> K. Heinsöhn et alii, eds., *Zwischen Karriere und Verfolgung: Handlungsräume von Frauen im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Frankfurt/M, 1997; G. Schwartz, *Eine Frau an setner Seite: Ehefrauen der "SS-Stippengemeinschaft"*, Hamburg 1997.

persecution — there was discrimination against the wives of prisoners, and many women were also imprisoned, sent to labour camps, or deported. Women were also strongly affected by the collectivization of the countryside and by the repressions and famine connected with it. The introduction of the principles of sexual freedom also frequently wronged the women; the legalization and easy access to abortion, coupled with the shortage of contraceptives and primitivism of sexual habits often resulted in dramas. The introduction of divorces in 1917, and the fact that it was easy to get one, was also disadvantageous to women, as were the widespread informal conjugal unions. It was very difficult to prove somebody's paternity, and even more difficult to obtain alimony. One day, however, Stalin declared for the strengthening of the family. He formulated the thesis that a woman's task is not only work (in 1940 women in the USSR made up 43% of industrial workers and almost 70% of agricultural workers) but also motherhood. In 1936 abortion, if not for medical reasons, was forbidden. Of course, this did not improve the situation of women in the least, but made it even more difficult.

Officially, the authorities proclaimed the equal status of women and men, praised the female leaders in labour contests, celebrated the 8th of March as Woman's Day. At one time Lenin said that there can be no mass movement without women. Nevertheless, in 1924, women constituted only 8% of the Bolshevik party members. This percentage rose to 16 in the 1930s and 1940s. The party authorities consisted almost exclusively of men. Burdened with hard work and home duties, dominated by men — fathers, brothers, husbands and male work-mates — women were unable to go into politics. The only exception was Alexandra Kollontay, a historian, writer and politician. It was due to her that in 1919 a special department for women's affairs was created in the Central Committee of the Party, to be soon dissolved. Kollontay organized a campaign against illiteracy among women (the percentage of those who could read and write rose from 37% in 1926 to 72% in 1937), she engaged in social matters and fought for mothers' and children's welfare. She did not find approval in the eyes of Lenin and her party colleagues; regarded as an eccentric "women's advocate", although she officially renounced "bourgeois feminism", she spent many years outside the USSR, in Europe and the USA. Her activity could not,

however, work much change in the hypocritical attitude of the Bolsheviks to women<sup>5</sup>.

The Portuguese dictatorship was more favourable to women, probably because of its general character: it was the outcome of a revolution "from above", which eliminated both liberalism and fascism. In 1931, that is during the dictatorship, women were granted voting rights, but its prerequisite was a higher education than that which was required of men. In 1934 three women were elected to Parliament where they were mainly concerned with school reform. It is worthwhile stressing the considerable feminization of the Portuguese educational system at that time — women made up 76% of teachers in elementary and 36% in secondary schools. Salazar attached great importance to the problems of the family and maternity; as early as 1936 a special organization was created in Portugal to take care of mothers' and children's welfare (*OMEN*, organized by Maria Guardiola). In 1946 voting rights were extended to married women (who had been so far deprived of it) and those who paid the tax, regardless of their educational status. The strong influence of the Catholic hierarchy and the conservative character of the social model imposed by Salazar decided in 1947 the liquidation of the National Council of Women that had existed in Portugal since 1914.

In Spain during the Civil War women took part in fighting on both sides; many of them were Republicans, there were also many anarcho-feminist *mujeres libres* taking part in action. When the military operations came to an end, 30 thousand women were imprisoned, and one thousand sentenced to death. However, Franco did not quite succeed in shutting the women up in their homes and reducing them to taking care of their families, although such slogans were voiced by women themselves who joined the *Falanga*. In Italy the adherents of fascism brought about the liquidation of the former women's organizations. Mussolini announced to the world at large that a woman is obliged to obedience. However, it was not easy to shut up the lively and energetic Italian women in their homes. Adela Pertici Pontecorvo, a lawyer, the first woman-notary in Italy, many times submitted

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<sup>5</sup> B. E. Clements, *Daughters of Revolution: A History of Women in the USSR*, Arlington Heights, Ill. 1994; L. Edmondson, ed., *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union*, Cambridge 1992; R. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860-1930*, Princeton, N.J. 1990.

cases of discrimination against women to the Supreme Court. This moved public opinion and led to discussions that were not convenient to the fascists.

The situation in Germany became much worse after Hitler came to power. Nazism treated women instrumentally, seeing them mainly in two roles: as a source of relaxation for men-warriors and as females producing offspring. The Nazis praised maternity but only of women who were racially pure, and exterminated thousands of Jewish, Gipsy and Slav women. They introduced compulsory sterilization, forbade racially mixed marriages and broke up those which had been concluded earlier. The supreme principle was the three K's (*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*), which reduced women to bearing children, taking care of their homes or religious practices. In 1934 an attempt was made to restrict women's access to higher education. At the same time a large-scale exploitation of working women was going on. 8 million country women were incorporated into the *Reichsnährstand* — an organization that was to provide the country with food. 4 million working women were made to join the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*. In the years 1933–36 the number of industrial female workers rose by 29%, and in the following years by the next 19%. In 1939, that is on the eve of the outbreak of World War II, 52% of German women earned their living. During the war Germans made use of slave labour of thousands of women deported from the occupied countries to the *Reich*. They came from Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia... Lots of women were imprisoned and sent to extermination camps. They were beaten, tortured, raped and submitted to medical experiments<sup>6</sup>.

One should not, however, see women only as the victims of the Nazi system. Many German women became adherents of the regime. It is true that few of them were *NSDAP* party members — in 1934 about 6% of the total number — but great numbers of women engaged in the service of Hitler's state working in offices, in subsidiary military detachments, as functionaries in prisons as well as in labour and extermination camps. They were often zealous and dutiful performers of their, sometimes terrifying tasks, in no respect second to their male colleagues.

<sup>6</sup> U. Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches*, Berlin 1985; I d e m (ed.), *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. I-II, Göttingen 1998.

The Second World War, just as the First, was a very important moment, which changed a lot in women's situation. Men went to the front again, leaving their work places to women. In Great Britain there was a rapid growth in the numbers of employed women, in 1943 by 42%, in Germany by 45%, in the USA by 37% in relation to pre-war years. In some countries work became obligatory for women of an employable age (England, Germany). Women took the jobs so far reserved for men. In England, the first female war correspondent Erika Mann worked for the BBC, the Austrian emigrant Hilde Spiel became a correspondent for the "New Statesman". Since 1943 in Germany Anneliese Teetz had been the first ever female captain of a ship (on Hitler's own recommendation). The SS trained women as radio workers, General Staff assistants, prison and camp functionaries<sup>7</sup>.

After warfare was over, under the pressure of a group of woman-delegates (mainly Americans), in 1945 the formulation of an equal status of both the sexes was introduced to the UN Charter. Three years later (1948), under the influence of Eleanor Roosevelt and the Danish female politician Bodil Begtrup, formulations concerning the legal equality of both spouses, protection of the family and equality of pay were introduced to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The first article of the *Declaration* was edited so as to embrace both men and women; the statement: "all men are created equal" was replaced by "all human beings are created equal". The Constitutions of France (1946, 1958) and Italy (1947) introduced for the first time the principle of equal rights of both the sexes. In 1949 in the Constitutions of West Germany and East Germany, these principles were repeated according to the Weimar Constitution, despite the resistance that they encountered in West Germany. The question was settled due to the protests of women and a stand taken by the Social-Democratic deputy Elisabeth Selbert.

In many countries a revival could be observed of the old women's organizations and associations. However, a veritable outbreak of activity came later, in the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s, when the women's movement acquired a massive character. The impulses in this direction came to Europe from the USA, where the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s saw an authentic women's revolution. In 1968, on the

<sup>7</sup> P. Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War*, London 1984.

occasion of the choice of Miss America, the American women started to demonstrate against presenting and treating women as objects of the males' sexual desire. Bras, cosmetics and hair clips were burned in public, in Washington's Arlington Cemetery a great funeral of "traditional femininity" was arranged. Women organized peace marches, and set up groups that provocatively called their members Bitches or Witches. In New York the demonstrators put on red stockings — this was in reference to the bluestockings that designated highly educated women, criticized for ages for their slogans of women's emancipation. This movement called for the right to abortion, maternity leave, introducing women's representatives to Congress, passing the amendment to the Constitution that would forbid sex discrimination (the last motion was rejected in 1982, blocked by conservative States). The press and television, full of reports on the great colourful wave of Women's Liberation Movement, made the emotions run even higher.

News from America reached Europe. In Denmark women started wearing red stockings and paying only 80% of the bus-fare, since this was the relation of a woman's pay to that of her male colleague's. In Great Britain protests broke out against the election of Miss Universe. In Paris women laid a wreath with the inscription "To the unknown wife of the unknown warrior" at the Memorial to the Unknown Warrior near the Triumphal Arch. The editorial office of the women's traditional journal "Elle" was stormed by women's fighting squads. In Holland a number of happenings and demonstrations were organized by the so-called *Dolle Minas* (Crazy Girls), headed by the leader of the women's movement Wilhelmina Drucker, notorious for years. *Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frau* was created in Berlin, *Weiberrat* in Frankfurt-am-Main. The activists did not shrink from drastic actions, such as throwing tomatoes at the adversaries of women's liberation.

Women's mutual aid movements were spreading all over Europe, e.g. homes for female victims of violence in the family were organized (in Britain itself there were as many as 200 in 1980), special telephone numbers were established where raped women could seek confidential psychological and legal advice. Self-education groups of women arose where they discussed their rights, situation and its causes; mutual aid groups started to operate, where women learnt how they could help one another.

From 1972 in a number of countries a campaign started for state remuneration of the women's housework, for embracing them with insurance and pensions. In many countries even prostitutes voiced their demand to stop treating their services as a criminal offence (they achieved their goal in Great Britain in 1978); they protested against police repressions, the existence of state brothels and the exploitation of women by pimps.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw an extremely far-flung and intensive movement connected with the right to abortion; as a result, in a number of countries legislation became much more liberal: in Great Britain in 1967, in the FRG in 1974 (in the GDR complete freedom), in France in 1975, in Italy in 1977. The opinions of women themselves have been, however, divided in this matter. This issue is closely connected with the right of every man (and woman) to a free choice; on the other hand it is bound up with philosophical and religious concepts of when we can speak of the birth of a human being (the moment of conception? the moment when the nervous system and the brain take shape? the moment of delivery?). The fact was also emphasized that excessive liberalism in the matter of abortion actually frees males of any responsibility and makes their, not women's lives, easier.

These discussions were symptoms of a revolution in mentality and customs that took place the world over after World War II. In 1953 Alfred C. Kinsley published his book *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, where he argued that the sexual drive experienced by women and the women's orgasms are similar to those experienced by the males. Kinsley's theses produced a shock, nevertheless, they entailed considerable transformations in the attitude to women's sexual life. Some years later, American social psychologist Betty Friedan abolished the myth of the happy American family (*The Feminine Mystique*, 1963). Questionnaires she sent showed the deep frustration of women who felt pushed to the margin of life. A woman has a right to be a full person, not only a wife and a mother — Friedan concluded. In Europe a similar role was played by Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949), which became a bestseller and a *sui generis* Bible of feminism in the 1970s.

The UN declared 1975 a Woman's Year. Feminism was at its height then, but at the same time it was divided and diversified as never before. Side by side with the quiet adherents of "tradi-

tional emancipation” who emphasized the formal aspect and equality of women’s rights with those of men, there was a whole range of fractions, from liberal to radical, frequently connected with the extreme Left, voicing the slogans of the “total liberation of women”. These divisions in a large measure stemmed from the differences in the situation of women in various countries, from class, ethnic, racial and religious conflicts in which women are involved, it should be admitted, just as men.

Feminism has not answered unequivocally the question whether and how women differ from men. However, it seems that the most important thing was the conviction that differences need not signify a hierarchy, subordination or discrimination. In practice, this was of most consequence especially in the area of work and its remuneration. The statement that throughout the second half of the 20th century women continued to do most of unpaid housework is a truism. In Norway, e.g., the share of women in housework is estimated at 2/3, its value is supposed to make up 45% of the GNP, and one should remember that Norway is a country of considerable “emancipation” of women. Of course, the technical inventions such as washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum-cleaners, make these tasks much less onerous and time-consuming than before, nevertheless their burden is still a problem for women, despite such new conveniences as the possibility of part-time work, shorter working weeks (free Saturdays), and the possibility of doing some paid work at home (which was known, anyway, even in the previous centuries).

Men, as a rule, receive, for the same work, a higher remuneration than women<sup>8</sup>. In 1989 the wages of British female workers amounted to 62%, in Portugal to 83%, in West Germany to 86%, in France to 79%, in Holland to 77% of the earnings of men; at the very end of the 20th century these proportions continued to be unfavourable to women. According to the statistics of the EU, women in the EU countries earned, on average, 84% of the earnings of men: in Greece 95%, in Ireland and Great Britain 78%, in Sweden a little over 90% of the men’s earnings. In Austria in some domains women earned half the pay of men. In Poland, according to Warsaw’s Centre of Women’s Rights, women’s pay

<sup>8</sup> Cf. among others C. Duch en, *Women’s Rights and Women’s Lives in France 1944–1968*, London 1994; G. F. Budde, *Frauen arbeiten. Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945*, Göttingen 1997.

was by 30% lower than that of men in the same posts. Even in the USA women earn less than men. According to research done at the Congress General Accounting Office, between 1995–2000 this difference even rose; in 1995 a woman–manager received 14 cents less for every dollar earned by a man, in 2000 even 27 cents less. But in 2000 as many as 30% of women earned more money than their husbands in the USA taken as a whole. Over the last ten years the number of women who earn more than their husbands has almost doubled in the USA — from 7 to 11 million. This number also includes Hillary Clinton.

In 2004 in the USA women sued three powerful employers — the Morgan Stanley Bank in New York, the Boeing plant in Seattle and the Wal-Mart hypermarket in Aiken town, South Carolina, for discrimination and lowering their wages. The Morgan Stanley Bank made a compromise and paid several hundred women plaintiffs \$ 54 million as damages, without trial. Boeing, sued by over 29 thousand women, wants to reach a similar agreement and promises to pay several score million dollars. The lawsuit against Wal-Mart, accused by 1.6 million women, has not yet started.

More and more women are earning their living. According to the statistics of the European Union, in 1996 women made up 42.5% of the labour force. This percentage is growing by about 1% annually, although it is much lower than in the USA. About 72% of women at the age of the highest employment, (i.e. from 25 to 54) earn their living in the USA, while in the EU only 61.5%. However, between 1994–96 as many as 75% of new jobs became occupied by women. Each year 700 thousand women enter the labour market in Europe. In the USA from 1987 to 1999 the number of women running their own businesses rose by 78%.

It is enough, however, to come to a professional, learned or business conference, or board the business class of any airline to see that Europe continues to be a world of men. Women dominate at the lowest levels of occupational hierarchy, and monopolize the worst-paid jobs. According to the data of the International Employment Office of the UN in Geneva, the percentage of women in managerial and directorial posts rose merely by 1% between 1976–1989, from 16% to 17%. In 1995 in Germany women held less than 3% of directorial posts or in the Boards of Directors, only 6% of high directorial posts and 12% of

middle-level managerial posts. In France the percentage of women in directorial posts between 1982 and 1990 even fell from 15% to 13%. In Sweden at the end of the 20th century men held 92% of high managerial posts, while women only 8%. At the next level, defined in the statistics as “employees in posts of responsibility”, women made up 25%. At the level of the so-called “skilled workers” the proportion of both the sexes was equal. Women make up a majority in the lowest group of the so-called “routine work”: Swedish women perform 77% of those inferior, low-paid jobs.

All in all, according to the official statements, no country of the European Union achieved the equality of men and women at the threshold of the 21st century. Women's wages are lower, they hold inferior posts, and unemployment affects them more than men. This is so, despite the fact that more women than men acquire secondary education. As for the higher education, the percentage of women and men is about the same (22% of the population). Women are best educated in Finland (36% with higher education), and Ireland (33%), while Italy and Portugal lag far behind with only 10% and 7% respectively. However, all the statistics show that in Europe women read more than men.

The second half of the 20th century saw changes in matrimonial law and relations in the family — the classical patriarchal family started to disappear. In Great Britain the legal equality of the spouses was introduced even earlier, in the inter-war period. Nevertheless “Housekeeping Monthly”, a popular periodical devoted to running the house, even as late as May 13, 1955, advised its female readers to take care that the house should be a nice place of relaxation for their husbands. Thus, when the husband comes back from work, a good wife should direct the conversation to the topics important to him and not her, and even offer to take his shoes off. She should not undermine her husband's opinions, and should remember that he is the master of the house and she is not entitled to question his decisions. The changes in mentality and customs clearly proceeded more slowly than the transformations of the law.

In France married women were liberated from their husbands' protective power in 1965. In 1970 the qualification *chef de famille* was removed from the French law, and the term “paternal power” was replaced by “parental power”. In 1972

illegitimate children received equal rights with those whose parents were married. In 1975 it was already possible to obtain divorce by mutual agreement, unfaithfulness in marriage stopped being treated as offence, and the woman's duty to perform housework was no longer required by the law. Finally, in 1985 both spouses became fully entitled to administer their property. In West Germany the equality of women's rights with those of men was formulated in 1957, which was to stop the domination of men in the family and acknowledged the duties of both the spouses as equal, although different because of their sex: the husband was obliged to support his family, the wife to do housework; however, she was allowed to be professionally active if this did not interfere with her duties in the family, which was to be decided by her husband. In fact, the domination of the husband and the double burden of the wife's duties were sustained. Parents were supposed to take care of their children together, but the representation of the child before the law was reserved for the father. In case of conflict, the man's opinion decided.

As early as 1959 the Constitutional Court found this regulation inconsistent with the Constitution; it was not, however, until 1976 that the regulations were reformed so that the division of work in the family and outside of it was left to the common decision of the spouses; also the choice of the surname (that of the husband or wife) was left to the decision of the interested parties (since 1991 each of them can retain his/her own surname). In 1979 the right of parental care was extended to both spouses. It should be emphasized that in the GDR the system of Family Law granting the same rights to husband and wife was introduced as early as 1965.

In other European countries the family code also underwent changes that were favourable to women. In Portugal, complete equality of the spouses' rights was introduced in 1976. In the middle of the 20th century married women acquired a wide civil-legal autonomy in Holland and Belgium, in the 1970s in Luxemburg and Spain. In 1974 in Italy a referendum was held on the question of divorce, introduced in 1970; as a result, the possibility of divorce was sustained. In some countries rape in marriage started to be punished — in Austria it was even acknowledged as an indictable offence.

The protection of maternity was introduced all over Europe, e.g. maternity leave with financial compensation was either introduced or extended. Because of its falling birth-rate, France became the leader in pronatalist policy<sup>9</sup>. In 1977 maternal subsidy was replaced by family subsidy, paid to the families with children regardless of whether the mother was working or not. In 1978 almost 2.5 million French women received such benefits. In Sweden maternity leave was replaced in 1974 by parental leave, so that the father who took care of the child might take it, while the mother worked. Since 1989 this leave has amounted to 15 months, with 90% of the previous earnings paid. Since 1979 parents could apply for a shorter working day. From 1980 onwards, pregnant women received special subsidies in Sweden. In West Germany, a similar parental leave was introduced for child care (initially 10 months, later, up to three years). Even the birth of a first child entitled a woman to a subsidy and a shorter working time. In Poland the possibility of taking parental leave by fathers instead of mothers was created in 2001. The extension of mothers' privileges to fathers has enabled many families to organize child care in a way that is best from their point of view. This also signifies the final equalization of the rights of women and men within the family. Nevertheless, in practice, in most cases it is women who decide to take maternity leave, generally because they earn less; possibly, mental habits and custom pressures play their role in this respect, too.

None the less the sphere of social customs underwent great transformations in the course of the second half of the 20th century. Their visual sign was a revolution in fashions, even more drastic than that which took place in the first half of that century. Mini-skirts (1964) appeared, due to tights the last traces of girdles and suspenders had gone into oblivion, many women gradually gave up the last attributes of their sex in clothes and started wearing slacks. The "unisex" fashion was born — the same clothes for both the sexes, which, given the feminization of the appearance of men (long hair, ear-rings, chains, bracelets) made it frequently difficult to distinguish a boy from a girl. The introduction of the contraceptive pill (1960/61) finally tipped the scale in favour of sexual freedom. The next stage was the appearance of the abortion pill (1996/97). Getting rid of the fear of

<sup>9</sup> A. Cova, *Maternité et droits des femmes en France, XIXe-XXe ss.*, Paris 1997.

unwanted pregnancy, women for the first time could taste the comforts of unconstrained sexual life, orientated, just as in the case of men, towards self-satisfaction. This was another blow to the traditional family, giving rise to more free unions, more divorces as well as the growth of the numbers of single mothers and illegitimate children. Marriage now, instead of being a result of practical calculation, is more and more often an emotional union of two people, the more fragile, because based solely on passion, and not on the sense of duty. Women started learning to love in the same way as men do; they eagerly and quickly acquired a new style of life.

The stereotype of a woman as a weak and delicate creature is disappearing. In the first half of the 20th century only a few sports were practised by women: skating, especially figure skating, tennis, volley-ball, skiing, swimming, and running. In the second half of the 20th century women started to train wrestling, weight-lifting, soccer, judo, kick-boxing, and classical boxing (7 thousand women belonged to the German Boxing Union in 1958). In Spain there appeared female treading.

Women serve in the armies of many countries, although this often arouses objections. The German Constitution forbids women an active use of arms during military service. Therefore, apart from musical and medical units, there are no women in *Bundeswehr*. The German women protest against these principles, bringing their protests to the European Tribunal. In Spain women have served in the army since 1992. In 2003 in the army of over a hundred thousand people there were already 10 thousand women. In 1995 the Finnish Parliament decided that women may serve in the army. In the USA women make up 11.6% of the soldiers, in Canada 8.56%, in Great Britain 7%, in Hungary 11%, in the Czech Republic 7%. In Poland the military schools admitted the first woman in 1999; this was a result of complaints directed to the Polish Ombudsman. In 2002 in the Polish Army there were 290 professional women-soldiers (156 in the land forces and 91 in the navy). The medical corps numbered as many as 240 women. The highest rank a woman held in Poland was that of Major (7 women), 88 women had the rank of Captain, 42 of Lieutenant, 66 of Second Lieutenant (data from 2002). So one can hardly speak of an "equal status" of women in the Polish army. It is perhaps worth adding that about 200 thousand women served

in the NATO forces in 2002. Women are obliged to do military service in Israel. It is also worth recalling that as early as 1963 the first woman — a Russian, Valentina Tereshkova — went into space and flew round the Earth. In 1999 Eileen Collins (an American) was the first ever woman to command a spacecraft — the Columbia Shuttle.

At the turn of the 20th century women are ever more willing to take part in acts of violence — many of them gain gloomy fame as terrorists and performers of suicide attacks. Is it, however, a fact that only contemporary women are marked by aggressiveness and a tendency to violence? Many historical sources show that women took part in social and religious rebellions, wars and riots. In the past women did not shrink from acts of individual terror, either. Towards the end of the 18th century, during the French Revolution, renown was gained by the assassin of Marat — Charlotte Corday. In 1881 the Russian revolutionary Sophia Perovska took part in the successful attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II. In the 1960s and 1970s ill fame was gained by the German terrorists Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin and Ingrid Müller, connected with the so-called *Rote Armee Fraktion, RAF*. All the above-mentioned persons were educated, intelligent, sensitive to social deprivation, ready to make the highest sacrifices for their ideas.

At the threshold of the 21st century a large “reservoir” of women terrorists emerged in the countries fighting for their freedom, Chechenya and Palestine. The woman-terrorists from Chechenya, commonly called *shahidkas* or black widows, are generally young (between 25–35 years of age) wives, mothers and sisters of men who lost their lives in battles against the Russians. Their suicide attacks (they detonate belts with explosive material hidden under their clothes) were especially frequent in the years 2000–2003. Their fields of operation are both the Caucasus (Chechenya, Ingushetya, Osetya) and areas of Russia, especially Moscow, where the black widows blow up government buildings, trains, the underground and buses. The most famous was the attack on the Moscow Taganka Theatre. In October 2002 it was occupied by a group of several score terrorists, half of whom were women. Several hundred spectators were taken hostage. The action of the theatre’s recapture, carried out with much brutality and incompetence, caused the death of all the terrorists and

many hostages. In all, at the threshold of the 21st century there were several scores of attacks made by female Chechenyan kamikazes, in which several hundred people were killed and many thousand injured.

Just like Chechenyans, young Palestinian women practise terrorism in Israel. Initially, the ideologists of the Hamas and the Islamic Dzhihad thought that women should not be permitted to perpetrate suicide attacks. At the turn of 1999 the spiritual leader of the Hamas, sheikh Ahmed Yassin (killed by the Israelis at the beginning of 2004), announced that if there were not enough men, the attacks would be conducted by women. In winter 2000/2001 the Al-Aksa Brigade of Martyrs created a women's squad. The first woman suicide was Vafa Idrisis, a 26 year old divorcee who worked as an emergency nurse in the refugees' camp in Ramallah: in January 2002 she blew herself up in the centre of Jerusalem, killing an elderly Jew. On 27 February 2002 Dareen Abu Aisheh, a female student of an English School, blew herself up near an Israeli sentry-box on the road between Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. On the evening of 27 March 2002, the Eve of Passover, the 18 year old Palestinian girl Ayat al-Akhras blew herself up in the supermarket called "Supersol" in the suburbs of Jerusalem, killing a guard and the 17 year old Israeli girl, Rachel Levy. Another suicide attack by a Palestinian woman took place on 19 May 2003. On 4 October 2003 in a restaurant in Haifa an explosion caused by a suicide attack killed 20 people and injured several score others. The suicide was the 27 year old Hanadi Dzharadat from Dzhenin; she did it in revenge for the killing of her brother by the Israeli soldiers. Hanadi was just finishing her apprenticeship in a lawcourt, a week later she was to become a licentiate lawyer. On 14 January 2004 another young Palestinian woman, mother of two children, blew herself up on the frontier-crossing in Erez. This list is certainly not yet finished.

The Chechenyan and Palestinian terrorism is somewhat different from the acts committed by European women. Its perpetrators are also young, well-educated females, driven by ideological motives — in this case, patriotism; in fact, however, they are manipulated by Islam, which plays on their strong emotional ties with the males in their families, in order to incite them to acts of revenge motivated by their sense of family and clan solidarity. Paradoxically, however, in Islamic countries, as women they have

an inferior status in their families or clans. On the other hand to be a terrorist could mean for Islamic woman a sort of emancipation; by her action she proves to be equal with men.

In the second half of the 20th century the changing situation of women made societies grow aware of the phenomenon that had humiliated the "second sex" for centuries, namely sexual molestation. The first trial of such a case took place in the USA in 1975. The civil rights act of 1991 widened the range of claims for damages on this ground from 50 thousand to 300 thousand US dollars. In the 1990s American lawcourts adjudged damages to about 20 thousand victims of molestation. As a result firms started to insure themselves against such charges, creating their own regulations in this matter. The first such regulation was issued at the University of Virginia in 1992. The most restrictive rules against molestation were introduced in the US Army; they concern not only men, but women, too, since it came to light that men also happen to be victims of this abuse.

The 1990s in Europe saw a tide of actions against molestation. In France a regulation about the infringement of an employee's dignity was introduced to the labour code in 1992 — molestation was punished by fines up to 100 thousand francs or even imprisonment. In Holland an act on the obligation to fight molestation has been in force since 1994; its perpetrator is punished by reprimand or even a dismissal from work. In 1998 Israel introduced a very severe punishment (up to four years in prison) for sexual molestation.

In Poland art. 11 of the labour code of 1996 says that discrimination in a place of work because of sex, age, nationality, political or other persuasions is inadmissible. Regulations have also been introduced that enable one to claim compensation for molestation, which infringes personal rights (art. 23 and 24 of the amended civil code). Art. 170 of the criminal code envisages up to 5 years in prison for people who extort licentious acts by taking advantage of their superior position. The first trials have already taken place. In April 1998 the press announced that the female employees of the Teatr Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław sued their director for molestation. In 2002 an emergency surgeon in a small town in the south of Poland was sentenced for molesting the nurses (according to "Gazeta Wyborcza" of 12 May 2002). Social condemnation of such behaviour

arises slowly, and not without reservations. A similar condemnation is slowly emerging concerning pornography, which in a glaring form presents the males' domination, violence and subordination of women whose bodies are treated as a commodity accessible to any client. More and more often we also have to do with masculine pornography — this testifies to the “equalization of rights” taking place at the turn of the 20th century.

The end of the 20th century saw some characteristic changes in the attitude to prostitution<sup>10</sup>. The most advanced was Sweden, where on 1 January 1999 Parliament resolved to punish for paid love not the prostitute but her client. Other countries also introduced restrictions concerning this profession, so degrading for women. In Canada, prostitution is forbidden in public places. In Denmark, it is forbidden as a means of earning a living. In Great Britain there is a prohibition of “moving in public places in order to practise prostitution”. In Norway open prostitution is punished as an offence. Towards the end of the 20th century prostitution ceased to be a monopoly of women and is performed professionally by more and more men. Especially young boys sell their sexual services to their partners, both men and women, thus continuing, so to say, the tradition of 19th century *gigolos*. The phenomenon of male prostitution is one more signal testifying to the progressive levelling of social differences between the two genders.

Nevertheless, women remain to be the main object of the white-slave traffic that flourishes on an international scale. Its dimensions are enormous. It is estimated that tens of thousands of illiterate women from poor African and Asian countries work in rich homes in the Lebanon. They are beaten, violated, exploited and treated as slaves. White-slave traffic flourishes in the Balkan countries and the former Republics of the Soviet Union. Hundreds of girls from Poland, Russia, the Ukraine, and Lithuania are abducted to the brothels of Germany and Holland every year. Deprived of documents, intoxicated with drugs, beaten and violated, they have no chance to regain their freedom. Only few do manage to escape and come back home.

Women continue playing the ancient role of victims. Statistics say that they suffer more offences and violence than men, even at the hands of their nearest and dearest. In Poland over 200

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<sup>10</sup> A. Corbin, *Les filles de noce. Misère sexuelle et prostitution aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Paris 1978.

women are every year murdered by their husbands. Violence in the family is an everyday phenomenon in all social groups and all countries. Alcohol, the habit of applying physical strength to solve quarrels and disputes, the tradition of extorting obedience from women, and on their part, a tendency to submissiveness, all this favours violence in family and social life. This is augmented by misogynic feelings, nourished by psychopathology, which revive from time to time, kindled by the rising position of women. In 1989 a madman, Marc Lepine, forced open the door of the University of Toronto (Canada), and shot 14 women, shouting anti-feminist slogans. There can be no doubt that the emancipation of women arouses the frustration of many men, their fear of losing the privileged position they have had and anxiety about their future. Ousted by women from the labour market, their macho status being undermined, they start having problems in their sexual life (erection disturbances), and feel pushed to the margin of their families. Since 2001 a Society of Men Calling for Equal Rights (*AHIGE*) has been operating in Spain; in 2003 a Society of Beaten Husbands was founded in Madrid. These are the signals of new times.

The role of women in culture has increased immensely, though they are still a minority in science<sup>11</sup>. In the USA women make up 30% on average of the academic staff, in individual universities from 10 to 48%. In 1999 in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology women constituted 13.1% of the employees. In American information science departments women make up 50% of the students, 28% of graduates, 16% of the holders of doctoral degrees, and 6% continue their academic work. In Europe these proportions are similar, or even more advantageous to men. At the end of the 20th century in France women made up 32% of the academic personnel of the National Centre of Scientific Research (*CNRS*); in Germany, on the other hand, merely a few or a dozen-odd per cent of university staff. The percentage of female university professors in the years 1996–1998 amounted to: in Portugal 30%, in Finland 18%, in France 13.8%, in Spain 13.2%, in Norway 11.7%, in Sweden and Italy 12%, in Great Britain 8.5%, in Belgium 7%, in Denmark 6%,

<sup>11</sup> Cf. especially B. Hahn, *Frauen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, München 1994; C. Huerkamp, *Bildungsbürgerinnen: Frauen im Studium und in akademischen Berufen 1900–1944*, Göttingen 1996; E. F. Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Haven 1985.

in Switzerland 5.7%, in Germany 5.5%, in Ireland and Holland 4.9%, and in Austria 4.0%. In Polish universities women make up 45% of the teaching staff, but among the professors there are only 15.5% of women. There are only 24 ladies against 279 males among the rectors and prorectors of universities. All this testifies to the fact that women still remain in the margin of academic life.

Men have certainly monopolized the field of outstanding scientific achievements. All throughout the 20th century only 12 women received Nobel prizes in science, as against 435 men. However, in 2004 there were two women Nobel-prize laureates. The Nobel Peace Prize went to Mrs. Wangari Maathai, the vice-minister of environment protection in Kenya. She is the first woman to obtain a doctorate in biology in East and Central Africa, and the first female professor at the University of Nairobi. She was the organizer of the Movement of the Green Belt — the action of tree planting aimed against the desertification of Kenya, an activist fighting for work places for women and the improvement of their situation. The Nobel prize for literature went to Elfriede Jelinek, the Austrian author who criticizes Austria's Nazi past and propagates leftist and feminist views. Both these decisions have been acknowledged as controversial, but side by side with criticism they aroused much enthusiasm.

It is difficult to make up for age-long belatedness. Nevertheless, it seems that the participation of women in scholarship and science will be growing. In European institutes of higher education female students already prevail in such domains as medical sciences (68%), literature (65.5%), law (54%), and social sciences (50%). Women are in a minority only in exact sciences, such as architecture and engineering (18.7%) and mathematics and information science (27.6%)<sup>12</sup>.

The barriers are also falling that have recently still existed for women in the learned institutions. In the 20th century many female researchers still worked in the shadow of their husbands and for their sake, their work was frequently limited, officially, at any rate, to auxiliary occupations<sup>13</sup>. Only in 1945 could the first

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>13</sup> This may be exemplified by the story of Rosalind Franklin, due to whose work James Watson, Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins received in 1962 the Nobel Prize for the description of the structure of DNA. The woman—"assistant" was not mentioned at all, and since she died in the meantime, her contribution was not taken into account.

woman-microbiologist — Marjorie Stephenson — become a member of the English Royal Society. Even after World War II Cambridge University did not admit women to gaining degrees. The institutes of higher education have long remained fortresses of discrimination. The equality of opportunities appeared only in the 1980s, and its result was the choice of Prof. Marianne Grunberg-Mayer as the first woman-President of the French Academy of Sciences in 1994. A little earlier, Marguerite Yourcenar — a writer and philosopher — was chosen the first female member of the French Academy.

Women played a significant role in 20th century European literature. They were so many that one can mention only those most renowned internationally. Their list opens with the English-woman Virginia Woolf, the author of the famous psychological novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. She was also a journalist propagating feminist views. Her complicated personal life finished in 1941 with a suicide. The list also includes Simone de Beauvoir, the partner of Sartre; she was the author of the novel *The Mandarins*, analysing the French intellectual milieu, as well as of a *sui generis* women's manifesto entitled *The Second Sex*. At the opposite pole there is Simone Weil, a thinker fascinated by Christianity, though derived from a Jewish family. Her historico-philosophical, politico-scientific and sociological works contain deep reflection on the meaning of life and death. The first female member of the French Academy, the above-mentioned Belgian Marguerite Yourcenar, is the author of historical novels bordering on essays, full of contemplation of the fate of the rising and falling civilizations. She also wrote excellent translations of ancient and modern Greek poetry. Russian poetry reached its summits in the work of Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetayeva, Polish in the work of Anna Kamieńska, Joanna Pollakówna, Wisława Szymborska (Nobel Prize in 1996) and Julia Hartwig. European literature was under the strong influence of Americans: Emily Dickinson, a 19th century poet of moral and philosophical unrest, as well as 20th century poets such as Sylvia Plath (who committed suicide in 1963), Denise Levertov, Gwendolyn Brooks and Adrienne Rich.

A special trend of feminine creativity in the 20th century was the work of the so-called scandalizers, rioting against the traditional morals that hampered women's freedom. One of them was

the Frenchwoman Dominique Aury, the author of the sadomasochistic love story *L'Histoire O.* which appeared in 1954 and ran into millions of copies, translated into 20 languages. Another famous scandalizer was Anaïs Nin, resident in Paris, whose father was a Spanish pianist and mother an American singer. She won international renown due to the publication of her scandalous *Diaries*, where, among other things, she presented her affair with Henry Miller and his wife, June Mansfield. She also wrote a series of novels entitled *Inner Cities* and many erotic short stories, published in the books *Delta Venus*, and *Little Birds*, where she infringes many taboos searching for and presenting some erotic experiences. Women's literary creativity has indeed come a long way from its medieval beginnings dominated by pious religious subjects.

In the 20th century fine arts were enriched by the works of more and more outstanding women. Here, also, we can mention only the most characteristic examples. The list opens with Suzanne Valadon, drawer and painter, a model of Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Degas, mother of Maurice Utrillo. In 1937 she took part in the exhibition of female painters in the Paris Petit-Palais; here her works were exhibited next to the canvases of Berta Morrisot, Marie Laurencin, Marie Blanchard, Eva Gonzales and Sonia Turk. In the 1920s and 1930s great renown was gained by a half-Polish, half-Russian artist, Tamara Łempicka, who worked in Paris, New York and Italy, and combined in her art innovatory cubism with 19th century academicism and *art-déco*.

Women clearly dominated in the Russian artistic avant-garde of the beginning of the 20th century. The most famous were: Alexandra Eksler, Lubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, Varvara Stepanova, Nadezhda Udaltsova, and especially the oldest one of them (b. 1881) Natalia Goncharova, who had lived in Paris since 1914. She was fascinated by postimpressionism, fauvism, expressionism, but also by iconic painting. Her series "The Evangelists" (1914) shocked the critics.

Among the surrealists to mention is Frida Kalho, born in Mexico, wife of Diego Rivera. Her figurative, naive paintings, using simple symbols and metaphors, frequently referring to physical suffering (she was disabled), gained enormous renown especially after her death, at the very end of the 20th century. The partner and collaborator of Auguste Rodin, Camille Claudel, exploited

and dominated by him for years, was also a talented sculptor. She created beautiful, voluptuous nudes; especially famous were her sculptures entitled "Waltz" and "Maturity". The artist herself, who broke down the norms obligatory for women even at the threshold of the 20th century, went mad in 1913 and died in 1943. The Polish artist Maria Jarema was a well-known constructivist sculptor in the inter-war period.

In the first half of the 20th century abstractionism in painting was represented among others by Sonia Delaunay and Sophie Arp — both were wives of well-known French painters. Surrealism was practised by Meret Oppenheim (d. 1985), resident in Paris but derived from a German-Swiss family. She gained renown in 1936 due to her controversial work: a cup, saucer and spoon covered with fur, which became the icon of modern art. Later she exhibited her "Governess" — a pair of lady's high-heeled shoes, tied with a string like a piece of ham and placed on a dish. Animated discussions ensued concerning the meaning of this composition (a sexual fetish? cannibalism? a symbol of constrained femininity as an object of consumption?). Other surrealists (Leonora Carrington, Dorothea Tanning, Kay Sage, Leonora Fini) did not gain so much fame, although they also presented interesting compositions.

Niki de Saint Palle was the only woman admitted to the group of the so-called New Realists in Paris. Together with her husband, Jean Tinguely, she constructed the famous Stravinsky's Fountain near the *Centre Pompidou* in Paris in 1983. In the early 1960s she won renown with her "shot" pictures — during the happenings she shot at the cans with paint hung over the canvases — a new method of producing painting compositions. Later on she turned to sculpture and became famous for her "Nanas" — huge female figures with ample proportions, made of polyester and painted in bright colours. In 1963 she executed a gigantic sculpture of a reclining woman entitled "She" for *Moderna Museet* in Stockholm. Her biggest open air work was a garden of sculptures filled with 22 figures inspired by tarot cards, installed in Garavichio in Tuscany.

European art was under a great influence of "the mother of American art", Georgia O'Keeffe (d. 1996), whose canvases are full of flowers, bones (her favourite motif was the skull), images of deserted landscapes and heavens. Great renown and influence

on Europe and the United States was also won by the Japanese Yayoi Kusama, a patient of a lunatic asylum in Tokio who created fascinating worlds composed of dots, nets and phalluses. Her individual exhibition organized in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1998 testifies to her world-wide recognition. Even more renown was gained by Louise Bourgeois, a Frenchwoman, since 1938 resident in New York, author of voluptuous sculptures inspired by surrealism (among others her suggestive "Spider"). These international fascinations have certainly left their imprint on the work of Polish artists (Katarzyna Józefowicz, Katarzyna Kozyra, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Katarzyna Kobro).

Thus women have a large share in the fine arts of the 20th and the beginnings of the 21st centuries. Strikingly, however, just as at the threshold of the early modern era, that kind of career is frequently bound up with their family and personal connexions with male artists. Sometimes such a union helps a woman to develop, but sometimes, on the contrary, it makes her artistic career more complicated and difficult. Another striking fact is that, numerically, there is still a prevalence of males in fine arts. This dominance is acutely felt by women themselves. In 1985 in the USA female artists founded a group called Guerilla Girls (members appear in gorilla masks), a secret association of female art activists in New York. The idea — typical of mad Americans — arose as a result of the exhibition organized in New York's Museum of Modern Art presenting a survey of the paintings and sculptures of the most outstanding artists the world over. It turned out that among 169 artists there were only 13 women. However, one can hardly believe that such manifestations and protests can change anything in this respect, although Louise Bourgeois herself did put on a mask.

Women are also slowly gaining ground in other domains of art. The first female film director in the middle of the 20th century was the admirer of Hitler and Nazism, Leni Riefenstahl. Towards the end of the 20th century there were more and more women in the art of many countries. The famous film star, Jeanne Moreau, was the first woman nominated a full right member of the French Academy of Fine Arts in 2000. Female musicians, both performers and composers, (Grażyna Bacewicz, e.g.) compete with their male colleagues nowadays.

The last stronghold of the monopoly of males — their exclusive right to perform pastoral functions in Christianity — is slowly crumbling. The exclusion of women from these functions is based — since there are no instructions to this effect in the *Gospel* — on the discriminating statements of St. Paul, a representative of patriarchal Jewish culture and the resultant agelong tradition. Indeed, this phenomenon can only be explained by tradition and cultural conditions. The attempts to invoke Jesus in this case (like e.g. the fact that all the Apostles were men) miss the point. It cannot be overlooked, to be sure, that all the Apostles were Jewish, that there was no Greek or Samaritan among them; does this mean that only Jews can become priests? There were no representatives among the Apostles of the coloured peoples and yet nobody protests against ordaining Africans or the Chinese.

Women, pushed in Church to an inferior position, have for ages looked for a possibility to widen their share in religious life. In the 20th century, when cultural and mental transformations were ripe enough to break with all forms of sex discrimination, individual Churches started to open to women. The first woman was ordained in the USA 150 years ago — it was Parson Antoinette Brown. In the first half of the 20th century women appeared as priests in the Polish sect called *Mariawici*. In 1928 12 women were ordained, and two became bishops. In the 1930s in this Church there were already 12 female bishops and over a hundred female priests and deaconesses. It was precisely the ordaining of women that became one of the reasons for a split in this Church (into the so-called *Łock Mariawici* — called the Old-Catholic Church, and Felician Catholic *Mariawici* Church), as well as for the exclusion of the *Mariawici* from the Union of Utrecht that assembled Old-Catholic bishops. The *Mariawici* of *Łock* abolished the priesthood of women in 1958, while the Felicians preserved it.

In the Lutheran Church the first women were ordained in Holland in 1929, and in 1958 in the German Palatinate. In 1958 also the Lutheran Church in Sweden acknowledged the priesthood of women and in 1960 the first woman pastor took there holy orders. In Germany the Lutheran Church accepted the ordination of women in 1963, and in 1972 they were granted full rights in this respect. At present (data of 2002) there are six thousand female pastors in Germany, which means that every

fourth pastor is a woman. In 1992 the first woman — Maria Japsen — was chosen bishop in Hamburg (in the Lutheran Church bishops are chosen by the members of the community). In the autumn of 1999 another woman — Margot Kässman — was chosen bishop in Hanover.

In Sweden, according to the data of 2003, among the 3,400 strong clergy of the Lutheran Church there are 1,200 women, two of them holding the office of bishops. There are also two female bishops in Norway. In the Czech Republic the first woman pastor was ordained in 1953, and in 1999 Jana Szilerova became bishop of the Hussite Church. In many European countries women are ordained not only among the Lutherans (The Augsburg–Evangelical Church) but also in the Reformed, Methodist and the Pentecostal Churches. Women are priests and bishops in the Anglican Churches of the USA, Canada and New Zealand. In the Church of England (Great Britain) the first woman was ordained in 1994, which caused sharp protests and the secession of several hundred parsons and a few bishops, who joined the Roman Catholic Church. Today, in the Church of England discussions are being held on the episcopal ordinations of women.

Thus culture and mentality have changed so much that the priesthood of women, although not without some opposition, is more and more widely accepted. This idea, however, finds it hard to be adopted in Poland. In 1972 the first and only one female pastor so far, Ewa Dolej, was ordained in the Polish Methodist Church, after many years of her service in the Gliwice parish. In the Polish Lutheran Church women have been ordained since 1999, but they are not granted equal rights with men — strictly speaking, they are only deaconesses. On the other hand, the synod of the Reformed Church in Poland changed the principles of the ordination of pastors in 1991, by replacing the word “man” with the word “person”. This opened the way to the clergy for women. Nevertheless, it was more than ten years later before the first ordination of a woman. In the Zelów church near Bełchatów, Wiera Jelinek was ordained pastor only in 2005.

The most reluctant to accept the ordination of women are the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches (it is even said that the Vatican sticks to its unrelenting position in this matter so as not to hinder the oecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox Church). Of course, emancipatory tendencies are spreading with-

in the Catholic Church, especially in the USA, Canada and the West of Europe. This is often caused by the inadequate numbers of men with a calling for priesthood and consequently, the insufficient number of priests (for this reason, e.g., many married men, and even women, were ordained in the clandestine Catholic Church in communist Czechoslovakia). The present attitude of the Catholic Church to this matter — an unrelenting “no” — is expounded in the Apostolic Letter of John Paul the Second's *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* of 22 May 1994. The International Theological Commission created by Paul VI in 1969, subordinated to the Congregation for the Matters of Faith, also declared against the idea of the diaconry of women (2002), despite the fact that this can find support in the tradition of the first Christians. Desperate attempts to overcome such attitudes have ended in failure. In June 2002 on board a ship sailing down the Danube in Austria seven women from Austria, Germany and the USA were ordained by Rev. Romulo Breschi, the Apostolic Archbishop of the Catholic Charismatic Church of Jesus the King, which broke away from the Vatican. The ordained women — all with a higher theological education, among them some nuns — were excommunicated.

Thus women, who traditionally constitute the majority of believers in parishes, are still condemned to a “silent presence” in the Roman Catholic Church<sup>14</sup>. It must be admitted, however, that their share in religious life is nevertheless expanding, especially in Western European countries. Women have been admitted to theological studies and can even lecture on Catholic theology. The first woman professor of theology was Uta R a n k e H e i n e m a n n at Essen University in 1970. She lost her chair in 1987, excommunicated for the publication of two books, critical of the Vatican and the clergy: *No and Amen* and *Eunuchs to Paradise*. In Germany, where the Protestant practice cannot but affect the Catholics, women are allowed to read lessons from the *Bible* in Church, sometimes to deliver homilies, and to administer the Holy Communion to the sick in their homes. Girls can serve at Mass on a par with boys. The situation is similar in Holland, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries.

<sup>14</sup> See the excellent book by Elżbieta A d a m i a k, *Milcząca obecność (The Silent Presence)*, Warszawa 1999, Biblioteka Więzi.

Changes in this sphere only recently came to Poland, accepted with difficulty by the conservative clergy. In the Lublin diocese the nuns are now allowed to be extraordinary distributors of the Holy Communion on the strength of decisions of bishop Bolesław Pylak and his successor, archbishop Józef Życiński. Girls in Poland do not serve at Mass, except for one parish in the Opole district (probably influenced by the models coming from Germany), although the Papal Council for the Interpretation of Legal Texts allows girls to be acolytes (the principle confirmed by John Paul II in July 1992).

In the interview published in the supplement to "Gazeta Wyborcza" in 1999, Rev. Mieczysław Maliński expressed the view that the position of a woman in the Church is a question of culture and not of faith, and probably in a hundred or two hundred years women will perform the function of priests in the Catholic Church<sup>15</sup>. Rev. J. A. Skowronek in his article *Siding with the Truth* published in "Tygodnik Powszechny"<sup>16</sup> calls Mary of Magdala the "Apostle of the Apostles" and says that in the early Church she played a leading role; her person invites reflection upon the role of women in the Church. These two opinions seem to be very prudent and hope-inspiring.

The participation of women in the political life of Europe was definitely widened due to the fact that they acquired the active and passive right of the vote. Nevertheless, their situation is not simple, since old habits and prejudices have remained. For this reason in some countries (e.g. in Sweden) the law envisages parity, that is the same number of men and women, or some established percentage quota on the list of candidates. The introduction of parity frequently encounters opposition, e.g. in France parity had not been introduced until the year 2000, and then only after heated discussions. Parity itself, for that matter, does not solve the problem, since women are usually placed at the end of the lists, which discourages the voters from choosing them. As a result, the numbers of ladies in parliaments are fewer than those of gentlemen and do not correspond with the structure of population. In 1999 Sweden was the only country where women made up almost a half of the deputies (43%), as against 37% in Denmark, 34% in Finland, 31% in Holland, 30% in

<sup>15</sup> "Wyokie Obcasy", 28.08.1999.

<sup>16</sup> "Tygodnik Powszechny", 16.04.2000.

Germany, 9% in France, and only 6% in Russia and Greece (data of 1992). In 2002 in Sweden there were 45% of women in Parliament, in Germany 30%, in Spain 28%, in Great Britain 20%, in the Czech Republic 15%, in Italy and France 12%, in Russia 10% and in Poland 20%<sup>17</sup>.

The sessions of the houses are generally controlled by men, although in 2000 in Spain two women: Esperanza Aguirro and Luiza Fernanda Rudi were chosen speakers of both houses. In Finland, also a woman — Riita Uosukainen — was the speaker in 2000. The speaker of the Parliament of Serbia — Natasha Micić — from January 2001 took the office of the President of her country, since no candidate received the required number of votes in the presidential elections.

There are few woman-ministers. Most often they are ministers of foreign affairs, probably because of their talent for diplomacy and ability to avoid conflict in negotiations. In Sweden, the minister of foreign affairs was Anna Lindh, murdered at the end of 2003 by a psychopath. In Finland, towards the end of the 20th century the head of diplomacy was for a long time Tanya Halonen. In Georgia, at the beginning of 2004 Salome Zubarashvili became its foreign minister (earlier on, she worked for the UN and the Euro-Atlantic Council where she represented France). The largest number of woman-ministers (8 among a total of 17) is in Sweden and Finland (7 among 18). In Denmark, among its 21 ministers, there are 9 women. Few women are members of the governments in Greece (one in a total of 20) and Portugal (2 among 19). The number of women in the governments of Central-Eastern European countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania) as well as Russia, is minimal.

There are still very few women in the party authorities of almost all the countries of Europe (although in Germany, the *CDU* is headed by Angela Merkel). Poland could serve as the best example of “a democracy with a male face”. Women played a great role in the “Solidarity” movement (half of its members!), also during the period of martial law, active in its underground structures (press publishing, money-raising, hiding of persons sought by Security and the police, etc.). But during the Round Table sessions there was only one woman among the 60 opposi-

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<sup>17</sup> According to EU statistics.

tion activists. In the parliamentary elections of June 1989 only 62 women were chosen, as against the total number of 460 members<sup>18</sup>. There are few women in the authorities of all the parties, in the government there was only once a woman—prime minister (H. Suchocka), two women deputy prime ministers (I. Jaruga–Nowacka, Z. Gilowska) and female ministers are few and far between (I. Cywińska, K. Łybacka, A. Kamela–Sowińska).

Nevertheless, there are more and more female state leaders among the European politicians. The most outstanding of them was certainly the “Iron Lady” — Margaret Thatcher, the long-standing (1979–1990) prime minister of Great Britain and head of the Conservative Party. It is worth recalling that in 1975 she received, as the first woman, a life honorary membership of the Carlton Club in London, which assembles the prominent members of the Conservative Party. It was only in 1998 that this club accorded its membership rights also to other women; earlier 72 ladies enjoyed the status of associate members, without the right to enter some rooms and take part in voting. In 2005 Angela Merkel was elected Chancellor of Germany.

Outside Europe, the name of stateswoman can also be applied to Hillary Clinton, who may even become in future the first woman-president of the United States, and Condoleezza Rice, an outstanding political scientist and adviser to G. W. Bush. In New Zealand, an equally outstanding Helen Clark became prime minister in 1999. In January 2006 in Chile Michelle Bachelet was elected President.

The president of Latvia has for the last few years been Vaira Vyke–Freiberga, earlier an emigrant in Canada, a psychology professor at the University of Toronto. The prime minister of Finland was for a few months in 2003 Anneli Jäätteenmäki, unfortunately involved in a shady affair and trial. Many women are active in international organizations. The Swiss woman Carla del Ponte is the head of the International Tribunal for War Crime in the Hague; earlier this function was fulfilled by the Canadian woman Louise Arbour. The Frenchwoman Nicole Fontaine, a lawyer by education, was the head of the European Parliament between 1999–2001. Between 1979–1982 this office was held by

<sup>18</sup> Cf. S. Penn, *Podziemie kobiet (Women in Underground)*, Warszawa 2003.

her compatriot, Simone Veil. In the European Commission there are usually a few ladies holding the titles of the EU ministers.

In the Amsterdam Treaty signed in 1997 the equality of the sexes was recognized as one of the priorities of EU policy. The treaty speaks of the extension of the principle of equality of men and women to embrace all the spheres of life, that is not only economics but also the area of social and cultural issues. The situation and rights of women were subjects of sharp conflicts at the great international congresses organized in turn in Cairo (1994), Beijing (1995) and New York (2000). These congresses dealt not only with the so-called third world countries, but also, to some extent with Europe. Despite the verbal victory of the principles of the equality of men and women and condemnation of any sex discrimination, the situation is still far from satisfactory. Among 1.3 milliard people living in poverty the world over, women constitute almost 70%. Women and children are estimated to make up about 75–80% of the 27 million strong group of the world's refugees. Among 130 million children who do not go to any school the world over, 2/3 are girls. Most women earn only three quarters of the pay that the males receive for the same work. Between 20 and 50% of women, depending on their country of residence, are victims of their partners' violence.

One must still speak of "the inferior sex".

*(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)*