Editorial

The recognition of the universality of women’s subordination is the basis of all feminist work. But the specificity of gender divisions is determined by history, culture, race and class structure. The articles in this issue reflect, we hope, some of the variety of women’s experience and the nature of their struggles against oppression in Africa. The objective of a ‘Women’s Issue’, however, is not merely to ‘write women back in’ to history and into the record of class struggles. It is also to further the issues that feminist-socialism has raised in the analysis of gender, class and imperialism in Africa. These issues are taken up later in a Debate by Roberts which discusses developments in socialist feminist analysis and the political implications of our work.

Two of the articles in this issue are concerned with the effects upon women of socialist strategies for transformation in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Both point out that without a prior or contemporary transformation of gender inequalities, such strategies are insufficient in themselves as a basis for women’s liberation. This is so even when women’s participation in national liberation struggles has been acknowledged and when progressive legislation and egalitarian policies in favour of women have been implemented. Socialist strategy has as yet failed to grasp the pervasiveness of gender divisions, even within socialist thinking and within the social structures upon which the strategy itself aims to build. The political space which socialist governments may confer upon women all too often constrains them to make demands upon themselves and not upon men.

In the early 1970s President Machel of Mozambique articulated the need for women to be fully integrated into the development process and outlined a programme specifying education, politics, the economy and the revolutionary concept of the couple and the home as areas which would be simultaneously taken into account. Urdang’s article points out that some gains have been made and that the Organisation of Mozambican Women has effectively served as a means for mobilising women both economically and politically. But until FRELIMO alters the basic structure of gender relations in the family and the division of labour in the home, women engage in community affairs and the larger economy only at the cost of doubling their work-loads. Mere admonition that men and women should voluntarily treat each other as equals, in the absence of concrete mechanisms for effecting and supporting positive change, seem to be doomed to failure, and thus in turn serve to reinforce notions that the present state of gender relations is both natural and inevitable.
In Zimbabwe, agrarian transformation strategy aims at 're-uniting families'. While this policy meets a passionate demand from a people divided by the racist policies of colonial capitalism and a war for national liberation, its effect is to conserve gender inequality in the peasant household now being reconstructed. Men have regained the possession of the land for which both women and men fought, and policies for women still demand a double burden of productive and reproductive labour.

Jacob's article on Zimbabwe in fact supports an argument, common to much research on gender in Africa, that colonialism intensified the sexual divisions and gender subordination of pre-capitalist modes of production. One aspect of this debate has focused on the way in which men, disposing of land and of the labour of women, gained control over cash/export crop production relegating women to the subsistence sector. Crehan's article traces, at a level of detail often absent from similar studies, the particular way in which this occurred among the Kaonde in Zambia's North Western Province. Unequal work-loads in the pre-capitalist economy, coupled with women's continuing obligation to supply a family's food requirements, has led to men monopolising production of maize for sale in the national market. As elsewhere the spread of capitalist exchange relations amongst the Kaonde threatens progressively to force women to divert their labour to the maintenance of the household food supplies and to reproductive work, thus depriving them of any independent source of cash income and increasing their dependence upon those (most frequently their husbands) whose expenditure of labour commands a monetary return.

The general implications of the sexual division of labour in cash crop and food crop production is further taken up in a review by Jane Guyer on the agricultural policies of aid agencies in Africa. Women's work as food producers is frequently denigrated, not least by the absence of or bias in the interpretation of 'statistics' on agricultural production. In this case, Guyer points out that while planners bewail the decline in food production, their own figures show that the production of tuber crops — which is women's work in many African agrarian economies — do not actually show any such decline. The disingenuousness of aid agencies' policy statements, founded as often as not upon spurious figures, is one theme taken up in a companion review by Williams on the Berg Report. Blatant failures in agricultural development programmes are claimed as successes. We should not be surprised to read one day that the maintenance of food crop production by women, without the support of technology, credit or extension, has been the result of an ingenious hidden strategy on the part of the World Bank!

In fact, rural development strategies pursued by states or international agencies which are directed at women are as likely to marginalise them by the nature of the policies purported to be designed in their interest as those which marginalise them by neglect. All too often, policies by-pass the basic forms of discrimination and oppression which rural women encounter — lack of access to land, credit or technology; low pay as rural wage labourers; endless hours of domestic and productive labour — in favour of teaching them home economics, nutrition and craft production. Feldman's article on the women's group programme in Kenya points out that not only does it marginalise women from agrarian strategy as a whole, but only reaches a small number of women and possibly the better off ones at that. Criticism of rural development policies such as these should not be taken to mean that women do not want or need better nutrition, or the means for
reducing high infant mortality rates or access to cash incomes to maintain some
degree of independence and enable them to meet their cultural identity as
women. It is rather that such policies simply do not confront the reasons why
women should be so desperately deprived of the basic means of existence. They
do not challenge male control of women's labour power or the present
distribution of household or national income.

Two other articles focus on the process of proletarianisation of women in Africa.
This is an important issue about which much remains to be empirically
established. Bryceson's article in ROAPE 17 opened up a number of debates,
some of which can be recalled here. She pointed out that the proletarianisation of
women, unlike that of men, cannot be described as a process of separation or
dispossession from the means of production since women (in Tanzania) did not
possess the means of production in either the pre-capitalist economies or as
peasant producers. Rather, female proletarianisation is one means by which
women can escape from male control of their labour power. However, the wage
labour force is also structured on gender inequality and proletarianised women
face new forms of exploitation and sexual oppression.

The article by Gaitskell, Kimble, Maconachie and Unterhalter on female domestic
workers in South Africa starts off by raising a series of questions about the
relationship between capitalism, racism and gender divisions in a situation where
the majority of black working women are domestic servants employed in white
households. Here their daily experience of oppression as black, women, wage
workers is acute — and quite different from that of the majority of black men
and, of course of white women. Despite their isolation, however, black women
workers have fought against class and race oppression and their mobilisation
may begin to form their demands as women as well as workers.

The employment of women as paid domestic workers is not, as the article on
South Africa points out, a result of women's 'natural attributes' for domestic
work. In all societies where domestic workers are employed, they are drawn from
the most subordinate sectors of society whether these be defined by race, by class
or by gender, or all three. But women's employment as cheap industrial labour
has been characteristic of domestic and international capital which has justified
low wages and appalling conditions of work on grounds ranging from women's
lesser right to work than men to claims that a capacity for dull, routine work
and/or working requiring dexterity is built into the nature of women. Capital's
exploitation of women, however, has varied according to patriarchal relations at
the historical moments when they have encountered each other. The history of
women's exploitation in the industrial labour force in Britain or in Mexico, for
example has not been at all the same. In black Africa, women's participation in
the industrial labour force is as yet not only relatively small but also very poorly
documented. Dennis' article on industrial women workers notes that no one
knows how they are distributed between industrial sectors in Nigeria let alone
their total numbers. In the factory which she studied, the employment of women
on a 'quota' basis was not the result of any clear policy to recruit women as cheap
and docile labour but rather the consequence of a 'welfarist' justification for state
support of an otherwise ailing textile plant. Nevertheless, expectations
concerning women's performance as wage labourers inform their segregation
into one section of the plant, their exclusion from promotion and from the
acquisition of skills of use in the non-formal sector. Male workers still regard
wage employment as a temporary stage which will provide them with skills and savings to establish themselves as artisans or traders: women cannot and do not.

Research on women or research for women? One of the reasons why AAWORD (The Association of African Women for Research and Development, Dakar, Senegal) was founded in 1977 was to promote research which would be of direct benefit to women and not merely to test hypotheses of purely academic interest. AAWORD cast a critical eye on researchers visiting villages with questionnaires on family planning while local women were asking for better health facilities, or examining the issue of power and powerlessness in the household when women’s immediate demands were for piped water. It is true that women’s needs are immediate and basic. Yet at the same time if women’s powerlessness — the structures of gender inequality embedded in the household and in the class structures of community or nation — is not understood then the provision of water supplies does not work to the benefit of women. If rural women are not involved in the siting and management of water supplies; if the division of labour between production and reproduction is not challenged, if the gross inequalities of class and gender are not confronted, then women end up carrying more water until, quite literally, the pumps break down and nobody but them cares that the old drudgery has replaced the new.

AAWORD’s salutary warning about the metropolitan bias of women’s studies in Africa must be heeded. It is true, moreover, that some of what passes for women’s studies has been for the purpose of controlling women and has not been feminist in its politics or policy implications.

In this issue, we publish a briefing by a Sudanese Women’s Group which distinguishes between social science about women and social science for women and sets up an agenda for feminist research in the Sudan. Such research, they argue, must adopt an historical perspective in order to understand the dynamic underlying women’s oppressed position.

Socialist feminism does not yet have an international agenda, as socialism might have and has claimed to have. The specificity of women’s oppression in particular conjunctures of culture, race and class provides us with the grounds for international solidarity and also some of the causes of divisions between women. But we are only in the first stages of understanding the structures which maintain women’s everyday and lifelong experience of patriarchal culture, and feminist demands in different contexts are formulated on the basis of different experiences of political struggle. In the west, the contemporary white feminist movement has demanded autonomy from socialist organisations, even if working with other groups, in order to learn to organise around oppression and against male domination, to pursue specific demands and to make clear that feminism will no longer be marginalised or put off until after the revolution. In Africa, contemporary women’s organisations have emerged in the course of liberation struggles and are formulating their programmes in the light of their different experiences of patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism: the revolution within the revolution takes on different forms in the light of that experience.

In the belief that it is crucial to examine that experience, in addition to the articles we have referred to which discuss women’s position under colonialism, and under socialism, a major part of this Issue is given over to documenting women’s involvement in those struggles. We publish statements from various
women's organisations. SWAPO women describe the appalling deprivation and atrocities inflicted upon them under apartheid and under South Africa's campaign of repression and violence. Angolan women record the advances that have been made through women's struggles in the course of national liberation and of socialist reconstruction. The report of their recent First Congress stresses the necessity for struggles alongside men against imperialism and explain the context of women's demands within the revolution, describing their continuing daily experience of subordination to men. The National Union of Eritrean Women has just had its Second Congress which also explores the interrelation between the struggles for national status and for an improved status of women. These several reports and documents are included as our small effort to help women to learn from each others' experiences. Unless this happens, the danger we raised at the outset will remain: national liberation and the transition to socialism will leave women's subordination untransformed.

* * *

While the bulk of this issue is devoted to feminist issues, a number of items are included which do not just touch on women. One is a briefing on famine in northern Ethiopia which attempts to identify the factors contributing to the failure of food supplies. A second deals with refugee problems in Uganda in the aftermath of the Amin regime. Some advances have been made in attempts to reestablish national unity but there is much remaining to be done in some parts of the country.

Carolyn Baylies
Doris Burgess
Pepe Roberts

Apology: We would like to apologise to Fatima Babiker Mahmoud, author of 'Indigenous Sudanese Capital — A National Bourgeoisie?' published in the Debates section of ROAPE 26 whose name incorrectly appeared as F.M. Mahmoud.
The Last Transition? Women and Development in Mozambique

Stephanie Urdang

There is still much difficult terrain to traverse before women in Mozambique achieve full liberation. But the process has been set in motion, supported by FRELIMO and the Government who have acknowledged the struggle of women to be integral to the total revolutionary process which the country must follow. Urdang's concern is to gauge how far the official concern is manifested in practice, how far FRELIMO's underwriting of the need for women to achieve full equality and full participation in Mozambican society has affected the day-to-day lives of ordinary women. She finds much which is lacking, particularly as regards change within the family. As elsewhere, the widening of women's participation in the economy and in political affairs is achieved at the price, at the individual level, of women being obliged to double their work and responsibilities, rather than achieving a more equitable share of the total burden with men. Yet consciousness of the need for increasing change, particularly among women themselves, portends the possibility of progress in this area as well as in others.

The small, rather worn hall is crammed from one end to the other with women. They occupy every available chair and sit, straight-backed and straight-legged, on the floor. They have come from the bairros of Xai-Xai, capital of the province in Gaza, to greet me, a journalist visiting their country. They sing their welcome in harmony and rich voices. They shout their viva's with strength. The atmosphere in the hall is quite electric.

When a cultural group comes forward to express in dance the change in the lives of the women, some are dressed in men's trousers and ties. 'We are dressed like men,' one dancer explains, 'to show that women can now also express their ideas about life, make their own decisions, and do the work of men. We were not able to before.'

Many women want the opportunity to speak, some fighting shyness, others more confident. One of the first to stand up is an old woman, her face creased with decades of hard work under the sun. 'I am old. All my life I never believed such things could be possible. Now I can even write my own name. I still will do many more things, even though I am old.' A younger woman gets to her feet.

I stand up to continue to show our appreciation. If I could jump, I would jump so high to show how happy I am. I have witnessed many, many vital changes for women. We put on trousers and work like men. We work as bricklayers, we construct our own villages, we do all the work we were not free to do before. We are feeling liberated because we can be
absent from our homes for one or two weeks and our husbands don’t mind. Before they would have beaten us. I am not saying that women aren’t beaten anymore; some are. But most of our husband’s are supporting us and making sacrifices to allow us to do the work of the OMM (Organisation of Women).

Two hours pass, filled with accounts of the hardships suffered during the colonial period. Each with her own story, the women piece together a patchwork that portrays the horrors that they bore for so many years. Listening, it is easy to appreciate how deeply the gratitude for FRELIMO is felt, and how thankful these women are for an opportunity to forge a better life.

When the district ‘responsible’ for OMM brings the meeting to a close, she adds her own words from the platform, picking up the theme raised by the younger women:

We have talked a lot. We have related many stories. But I must talk about something we seem to have forgotten. We have forgotten to say that women have no voice. Where matters were being discussed, there were no women. Men said women could not think. But after we got our independence, this changed. FRELIMO says that all of us, women and men, can develop our minds, all of us can work. FRELIMO knows that women can think very well, that women are as capable of making decisions. A woman can be somebody. In the past days we never had a chance to have a hall full of women talking about our lives. But today we can be together from morning to night discussing our problems.

Although women speak of being ‘free’, about ‘feeling liberated’, there is far to go before this possibility can become a reality. However, the implications of these sentiments — that the liberation of women is a goal to be strived for — have not arisen accidentally, nor are they peripheral. They are acknowledged as a central foundation of government policy. How far such policy is in fact put into practice, however, is a matter for careful examination.

Images of the Emancipation of Women

Why bother with the emancipation of women? To answer this self-addressed question posed in his opening speech to the founding conference of the Organisation of Mozambican Women in 1973, Samora Machel spoke the following:

The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory. The main objective of the revolution is to destroy the system of exploitation and build a new society which releases the potential of human beings, reconciling them with labour and with nature. This is the context within which the question of women’s emancipation arises.

The recognition of the interplay between the total revolutionary process and the liberation of women is a basic principle in the ideology of FRELIMO, one that dates back to early in the armed struggle. It was a factor in the political mobilisation of people during the war and was put into action in a major way through the establishment of a women’s detachment. The founding of the OMM a few years later provided the occasion for a statement giving FRELIMO’s analysis of the situation of women in Mozambique and the importance of the liberation of women to the revolution.

‘Generally speaking, women are the most oppressed, humiliated and exploited beings in society’, Machel continues, giving weight to the fact that these truths are often only begrudgingly acknowledged — if at all — in other countries of Africa. This condition, he states, arose from the time when early humans began
to produce more than they could consume. 'Material foundations were laid for the emergence of a stratum in society which would appropriate the fruits of the majority’s labour. This appropriation ... is the crux of the antagonistic contradiction which has divided society for centuries'. With the unleashing of this exploitation, women along with men were subjected to the domination of the privileged strata. But while women are also producers and workers, there is a special dimension to the nature of their oppression: 'To possess women is to possess workers, unpaid workers, workers whose entire labour power can be appropriated without resistance by the husband who is the lord and master. Hence in agrarian economy polygamy ensured the accumulation of a great deal of wealth, and husbands 'are assured of free labour which neither complains nor rebels against exploitation. In this way the woman offers her owner benefits beyond that of a slave. She is a source of pleasure and above all, she produces other workers (and thus) new sources of wealth'.

Machel points out further that in order to sustain the oppression of women, an exploitative society requires the 'establishment of a corresponding ideology and culture, together with an education system to pass them on'. It is a process that evolves over thousands of years, and deliberately keeps women in 'ignorance, obscurantism, and superstition with a view to making them resigned to their position, of instilling in them an attitude of passivity and servility'. Because of this, women have not been involved in the planning and decision-making processes in society.

The antagonism does not lie between women and men 'but between women and the social order, between all exploited people, both women and men, and the social order'. This is emphasised as a fundamental point: 'Men and women are products and victims of the exploitative society which has created and formed them.'

The clarity of this position that socialist transformation is the only basis for the liberation of women is the main theme of Machel's speeches on the subject. It is the system that oppresses, and it is the system that has to be changed. Thus the emancipation of women can only come about within the total revolutionary process. In order to achieve this, Machel identifies four criteria that must be met:

1. A political line of action must be established. For women to emancipate themselves, there must be conscious political commitment to the revolution. This will then become concrete action, leading them to take part in making decisions affecting the country's future.
2. Women must be engaged in production. This will release productive forces and launch a process of economic development essential to a deeper ideological understanding and sound knowledge of the world around them.
3. Women must be able to benefit from a scientific and cultural education in order to achieve a correct understanding of their relationship with nature and society, thereby destroying the myths that oppress them psychologically and deprive them of initiative. This will foster women's participation at all levels of leadership and work.
4. There is the need for a new revolutionary concept of the couple and the home. This relationship has until now been based on man's superiority over woman, aimed at satisfying the male ego. The new Mozambican family relationship should be founded exclusively on revolutionary love between two equal people.
In attempting to assess the changes that have occurred for Mozambican women since independence, I will be looking at these four areas to help gauge the achievement, the problems, and the setbacks encountered on the road to the liberation of women.

**Political Commitment**

Virginia José Chambisse is the president of the agricultural co-operative of the communal village of 25 de Junho in Gaza. It is a postion that embodies considerable and varied responsibility. Although women workers outnumber men in many such co-operatives in Gaza, 25 de Junho is the only one to have elected a woman president.

Amelia Saia is the vice-president of the village of Eduardo Mondlanês Agricultural Co-operative, not far from 25 de Junho. Her confident manner contrasts with that of the shy younger women members. To observe her interact with the co-operative’s president and visitors confirms an impression of unusual self-possession. When her co-operative president describes the working of the co-operative to the visitors, the English words ‘two hours’ pop out of his careful explanation in Shangaan. Amelia Saia bursts into laughter and her face creased with a huge, teasing grin, she interjects: ‘He’s just showing off! He wants you to know he speaks English’. He is proud of the few words of English he has learned working in the South African mines and it totally undisturbed by the fact that a woman has challenged him in this manner. She is active in other areas of political life in the village — a member of the People’s Assembly, the head of the justice tribunal that represents three neighbouring villages, and a member of FRELIMO. Her husband, on the other hand, who was a Portuguese-appointed chief during the colonial period, is barred from party membership and from holding positions of authority.

Arminda Jaime Hombe is the OMM secretary for the district of Chibuto, Gaza, as well as the party ‘responsible’ for ideological work in the district. Chibuto has one of the densest populations of communal villages and Arminda knows each one well. Her visits are frequent as she goes about her OMM work, setting up projects, helping with problems, mobilising the women politically, and generally keeping in touch. She is young and dedicated, with an easy-going life-style that stems from an obvious ability to do the job well. She began her career as a teacher, but slowly the myriad of other tasks took over and she no longer teaches; she now combines her already full day with caring for her four young children, her youngest just a year old.

The elected members of the OMM secretariat for the four sections of the Maputo biarro Mavalane handle a wide range of problems that undermine women’s lives in the sprawling slum area. Their days are filled with such tasks as organising meetings to discuss OMM work, encouraging women to join evening literacy classes, mobilising volunteers for collective work projects, urging women to attend political meetings. Those responsible for ‘social affairs’ find themselves embroiled in urgent family problems exacerbated by the overcrowding and sordid physical conditions that plague the 16,000 residents of the biarro. Inherited from Portuguese colonialism, these problems typify the urban areas. There is a job to be found for an illiterate woman whose husband has taken a young lover and abandoned her and her five children; there is a payment schedule for child support to be organised for a deserted wife who returned to her parents’ home in
Inhambane; there is the intervention needed to try to reconcile a young married couple locked into constant quarrels over finances; there is the money to be collected for the funeral expenses of a recently widowed woman who had been left destitute. This intensive work by the OMM secretariat means that the women of Mavalane have somewhere to turn when their lives become too hard to bear, or when they simply need advice. The support the women get from OMM and FRELIMO, along with the new services such as water pumps, schools and clinics, are beginning to ease the burden of their overpressed urban lives. The OMM leadership is kept on the go trying to initiate and entrench a variety of such changes.

A common denominator running through these anecdotes is political commitment. It results from a political consciousness that grows out of active mobilisation by FRELIMO and mass organisations such as OMM. It is the fuel which drives the revolutionary process, but will be capable of continuing to do so only as long as concrete improvements to the conditions of life can be seen to result.

The political mobilisation that was undertaken during the liberation struggle was in many ways an easier process. Every oppressed Mozambican knew to the core of his of her being what it meant to live under the brutality of Portuguese colonialism. Women, it was found, became particularly adept political mobilisers and it was a role that they gravitated to in increasing numbers. Then came what seemed the ultimate victory: independence and control over their own country. But FRELIMO and the new government understood that the roughest battle was still ahead. The problem was profound: how to continue to mobilise people under even more difficult circumstances when expectations — often unrealistically — had been raised. It is a huge task to develop a politically conscious people who appreciate that this phase of the revolution requires great sacrifice and hard work, and to do so without a conveniently visible enemy and without dramatic victories in guerrilla warfare to act as a spur.

With independence, the commitment to the emancipation of women at the governmental and party level remained strong and, along with the revolution itself, moved into that new phase. OMM was charged with the responsibility of continuing the mobilisation of women, always a difficult task given their heritage of inferiority complexes, lack of practice in speaking out in public and making decisions, lesser exposure to the world outside their homes, firmer entrenchment in tradition and a tendency toward greater resistance to change. A critical shortage of women cadres compounded the problem. But once women began to move, many quickly developed commitment and leadership qualities that often outstripped those of their male colleagues, often because of the added impetus of women’s knowledge of their own double oppression. They have more to fight but also more to gain.

One way of assessing progress since independence is to look at the level of women’s political participation. There is a long and uneven route to be travelled before increased political commitment can be effectively translated into equality in political participation. Certainly in Mozambique — despite the Amelia Saias, the Arminda Hombés, and Virginia Chambissés — the overall picture is sobering.

Early attempts to involve women in political life came with the establishment of grupo dinamizadores in residential areas and at work places. These provided
women with a means of gaining leadership experience, and their involvement was assured because one of the seven members had to be the OMM representative for the area. But one out of seven is not a lot, and only rarely were women chosen for other positions of significance. Men were loath to relinquish their monopoly over decision making, and with women's participation secured in this way, there was little incentive for the men to change their ways. It became, for the most part, an exercise in tokenism, with issues relating to women put to the side. In general the grupos took the position that they were responsible for all decisions except those affecting women, which were considered the exclusive preserve of OMM. For some women though, involvement in the grupos, circumscribed as it was, provided the first opportunity to begin to develop politically, and the leadership potential of many women militants was first released in this way.

The grupos arose somewhat spontaneously with fairly limited initial direction from FRELIMO, and with a differing understanding from one to the next of the concept of the liberation of women. But by the time FRELIMO began a campaign (in 1978) to create party cells throughout the country, there was a conscious recognition of the need to seek actively to integrate women more broadly into political affairs, in part because of the obvious unequal representation of women then applying at all levels. Of the 249 delegates elected to FRELIMO's Third Congress in 1977 from the provincial level, only 48 (12.2 per cent) were women. Their representation on the Central Committee was only five out of 67 (7.5 per cent). Graca Machel, Minister of Education and Culture, was (and is) the only woman minister. The poor representation of women at the local level was criticised by the leadership and discussed at the Congress, and the different levels of the party structure were instructed to redouble their efforts to mobilise, organise and integrate women. As part of this campaign, it was stipulated that at least one representative of OMM should join the brigades that went out to explain the work of the party and the importance of membership. In addition, OMM members were included in the national and provincial planning groups set up to co-ordinate the campaign.

### DEPUTIES TO THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY IN SELECTED COMMUNAL VILLAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assembly</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Deputies</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>87.61</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>2,583</td>
<td>76.19</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>23.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>79.13</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>20.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>22,230</td>
<td>15,939</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>6,291</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figures have not been made public, so it is difficult to assess the success of such measures in increasing the number of women party members. A 1979 survey of a few villages in Gaza and Nampula, however, indicated wide regional discrepancies. In Gaza, with its high percentage of women and their active role in political life of the communal villages, over 50 per cent of the candidates for party membership were women. In Très de Fevereiro, for example, 32 of the 54 members (59.3 per cent) were women. In contrast, in five villages from four
different districts in Nampula, the only women party members were the local OMM leaders, and for the five Nampula villages surveyed, the highest percentage of women was 28.6, the lowest 8.7.

While the party guides the ideology and political perspective of the nation, the People's Assemblies provide a foundation for the exercise of democracy. The first elections took place in 1977 for assemblies at the national, provincial, district and local levels. As the table below shows, women's representation decreased in step with the move from local to national levels, the latter comprising a small number of women.

The dynamics of selection of local representatives in the village of Très de Fevereiro indicate both the problems associated with getting women into office and the resolve of the party to ensure their greater participation. First a list of candidates had been presented by representatives of the provincial structures of the Party. These had been chosen initially from the village residents who had shown leadership qualities during its formation and construction. Then a meeting of all the villagers was called, the names presented, and one by one the candidates had to give their background and face up to questions from the assembly as well as criticisms of past behaviour. Those that were considered unfit for leadership were stricken off the list. By the end of the day 33 names remained, constituting the first People's Assembly. Then came the election of the Executive Council. Despite the two-thirds majority of women, the residents proceeded to choose five men for the council. 'No,' intervened the Party representatives, 'you must have women on the Executive Council as well.' So two names were withdrawn, and two women elected instead. It was clearly difficult for the villagers to voluntarily choose women among the top leadership of their village, even though the majority of those attending the meeting were women.

Très de Fevereiro is not, unfortunately, reflective of a generally high participation of women in People's Assemblies. Rather it is an indication of what is possible for the future. The record in other regions and provinces is far less favourable to women, with some villages unable to muster up even one woman member.

Local Justice Tribunals provide another measure of changing political roles. The goal is to have such tribunals set up throughout the country, in neighbourhoods of the urban areas, in communal villages and in localities. Already they exist widely throughout the country. The Tribunals are responsible for handling problems relating to the family and between families, as well as petty offences, and have the power to impose small fines and other appropriate, but limited, punishments. In pre-colonial times this role was played by chiefs or councils of elders who were exclusively male. While there is no official policy stipulating that women be included on these Tribunals, most have at least one woman member.

OMM and Party structures are often a critical factor in ensuring women's participation on tribunals. The lack of visibility of the OMM committee in Mecufi District, Cabo Delgado, for example, was felt. When the all-male composition of the Tribunal was queried in one village, the visitors were told that it had not occurred to the village or to the Tribunal members that a woman should be included. If it had been requested by the 'structure' they would have complied, Tribunal members said.

A woman member of a FRELIMO cell in a communal village. A woman member
WOMEN & DEVELOPMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

of the People's Assembly, perhaps even on the Executive Council. A woman on the Council of the Agricultural Co-operative. An active OMM secretary who plays an energetic leadership role in the village. A woman on a special four-month leadership and literacy training course. When presented thus, it would seem that there is wide involvement of women in political activities. But what the listing masks is the frequency with which multiple positions are held by the same woman. It is a pattern regularly repeated at district or provincial level, an overlap that seldom occurs for men, and if it does, not for as many tasks. The reasons for the prevailing pattern are diverse.

One important factor is the varying degree of attention given to political mobilisation by OMM cadres in different areas. This in turn has much to do with the political commitment and consciousness of the provincial OMM structure, which varies from one province to another. The problem is exacerbated by the relative small number of women cadres, and the fact that when a woman militant begins to demonstrate that she is a talented mobiliser as well as a capable cadre in general, there is a good chance that she will be transferred to work from FRELIMO to a higher level.

The actions and support (or lack of it) of the normally all male FRELIMO district and provincial structures can also affect the mobilisation of women. If these 'responsibles' appreciate the importance of the emancipation of women and integrate this goal into the political education they undertake, the work of OMM in the general area gains strength.

Traditional attitudes of both women and men towards what is considered the legitimate position of women continue to curtail women's aspirations and ability to strengthen their political commitment. Because women in the past did not play an overt political role, they have to take a bold leap in the present to assert themselves as militants. Often this has to be done against strong pressure from antagonistic husbands. It is not uncommon for husbands who feel threatened by politically active wives to prevent them from attending OMM meetings and refuse to allow them to join the organisation. 'If you love OMM so much', is the frequent retort, 'let OMM buy your capilao (the length of cloth wound around the waist that are worn as skirts). Some men have even resorted to physical restraint, locking their wives in the house to prevent them from attending meetings, and some women have been beaten or thrown out of their homes by their husbands for persisting in their regular attendance.

In addition there is the practical reality of women's role within the household. The continuing burden of the sexual division of labour in this sector and women's total responsibility for reproduction leave them little time for outside activities. It is not surprising that when women do participate in political processes, it is on a local level. While encouragement by the government and Party and continued political education around the need for the emancipation of women is vital, it is not enough. Women's work drains the energies and resources of even the most committed women. As long as this continues to be largely ignored as a problem needing urgent practical solutions, a substantial constraint to the quest for the emancipation of women will remain. It is only those women most dedicated to the Mozambican revolution or who do receive support from their husbands and families who can keep up with all the required functions.

Although progress has been slow, it is not discouraging, particularly when
considered within two contexts. Firstly, if compared with the absence of political participation of women on political councils and in the general political affairs of the nation prior to independence, the advances made are far from negligible and one can only be impressed by the number of committed women from the local to the national level.

Secondly, the advances made in Mozambique in just six years since independence can be favourably compared to Africa as a whole. The mid-decade conference for the United Nations Decade for Women held in 1980 pointed out that the median rate of political participation by women in 1978 for all African countries responding to a questionnaire on the subject was 12 per cent at the local, and 6 per cent at the national level. For the same period the participation of women in Mozambique was respectively 28.3 per cent and 12.4 per cent. No report from individual countries showed figures even close to these.

With few exceptions, most countries in Africa barely pay lip service to the idea of emancipating women. The extent of the commitment to this in terms of both political mobilisation and programming in Mozambique stands out as unique.

Engaging in Production
The row upon row of cashew nut sorters at Mocita Cashew factory in Xai-Xai, capital of Gaza, are mostly male. In two rows, however, near the centre, pale blue scarfed heads of women are dotted among the men's, representing almost a quarter of the total workforce. The relatively small number of women comes as a surprise when one reflects that the workforce of nearly every other cashew nut factory in Mozambique is overwhelmingly female. At Mocita, the presence of women doing the same work as men and earning the same salary is a sign of victory. For two years, the provincial structure of OMM and active OMM members in the town waged a campaign against the administration of the privately owned factory, against the male workers and against the husbands and fathers of potential women factory workers to permit women to apply for jobs that up until then had been open to men only. Now there is an active OMM committee at the plant which, after further pressure, has been given permission and space to organise a child-care centre for the women.

Among the thousands of tea pickers in the north of Zambezia province, only a few are women. Perhaps the lack of effective OMM organisation in Gurue — a fact bemoaned to visitors by the district FRELIMO responsible for ideological work — may have something to do with the almost total absence of women workers in the area. Only a small number of women are to be found working in the factory as tea packers. My questions to management level employees — male — elicited stereotypical responses: 'Women can't carry the large tea-baskets while picking tea because they carry babies on their backs'. 'There is a higher absentee rate among women; they are not committed to work' (implication: it's only for pocket money). 'Women can't work on the factory floor because they can't handle the heavy bags of tea'. All of this was roundly denied by the OMM secretary in the largest of the tea complexes, Emocha, owned by the state. She spoke bitterly about the difficulties they were experiencing in hiring women. 'Women come and apply for work in rags. They need the money as much as the men, and still they are seldom hired.'

Of the four criteria for laying the basis for women's liberation, that which focuses on women's role in production receives the most weight in Mozambique. The
importance of women’s roles in this area of activity was emphasised in Samora Machel’s speech to the second OMM conference in 1976: ‘The decisive factor for the emancipation of women in her involvement in the principle task — the task of transforming the society’.

The emphasis in this speech moves from the static formulation of the problem (women need to engage in production) to stress on a more far reaching need for the revolutionary process: the need for women to be more fully integrated into the process of transforming production.

It is a significant distinction. To engage in production is relatively straightforward. It requires little beyond work, although it can lead to changes in other spheres of the worker’s life. Participating in the actual process of transforming production however, reaches deep into many facets of the lives of those involved. It leads to contribution to new directions, to participation in decision-making and ultimately control over input in production and a stake in the distribution of the product. It goes beyond transforming the workers’ role in production to transforming their role in social life. It burrows deep into many facets of women’s activities and has a profound impact on the process of their liberation. In a word, it means revolution.

The mechanisms for ensuring this integration differ as between rural and urban areas, from participation in peasant agricultural production to wage labour industrial production. In Mozambique, the population is overwhelmingly rural (some 90 per cent) and therefore what happens in this sector is crucial to the total revolutionary process.

Agriculture is the key to the future of Mozambique. The most critical problem confronting the country is the need to produce sufficient both to feed the population and to contribute to the generation of urgently needed foreign exchange.

The goal for the decade is the collectivisation of all agricultural production. As stressed soon after independence at the Third Party Congress in 1977:

The organisation of peasants into rural communities is essential for the development of collective life in the countryside and for the creation of necessary conditions for socialised agriculture . . . It is in these, through collective production, that the workers’ ideological battle grows stronger.

How will such programmes of communalisation and collectivisation effect women?

There have been a few significant statements of policy that reflect an appreciation of women’s role in the rural sector and of the oppression of women that emanates from this. One of the most detailed appeared in a text prepared for the 1976 conference:

The woman peasant is the most oppressed and exploited woman in Mozambique. Reduced to an object of pleasure, a reproducer of children, a producer of food for the family’s subsistence, an unsalaried worker in the service of the ‘head of the family’, the woman peasant at the same time has a very great revolutionary potential from which the Mozambican Revolution cannot be cut off. This observation is based on the objective reality that our principle activity is agriculture and that most agriculture is for subsistence and is done by women; the revolution must aim at transforming this agriculture into organised, planned, collective agriculture. Mozambican women not only cannot remain outside this process, but they must be its principal agents and beneficiaries. The Mozambican peasant
woman has to be assured equal opportunities to learn new techniques, to have access to the use of machines, to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and above all to participation in the political organs, in the direction and management to the same extent as her participation in the work.

The fact that transformation of agriculture can only be achieved if women participate fully in this process, while obvious, is all too often forgotten. Although acknowledged statements of policy in Mozambique, such as that quoted above, no concrete plans have been proffered detailing just how this can be realised. The gap between theory and practice is seen most clearly by the absence of such proposals in the plans of action worked out each year by OMM. This has not, thus far, been taken up in any serious way by the women’s organisation or viewed as central to its work.

Besides the absence of ‘how’, some apparently contradictory elements are evident in the overall ideological perspective. While emphasis is placed on the fundamental need to fully integrate women into the process of transforming production, insufficient focus is directed to a basic fact about women’s labour in Mozambique. Women are already engaged in production specifically, agricultural production. While the text quoted above points out that women are oppressed by the burden of their reproductive labour in the rural areas, it does not bring out clearly that so intensively are women engaged in production already, they are quite unable to heed a call to ‘engage in production’. In order to reconcile this situation, agriculture in its present form must be transformed — as the above quote points out. But women’s role in this process must be fundamental — a fact which at this juncture appears not to go beyond a statement of theory.

Collective work — be it in agricultural co-operatives or in factories in the urban areas does, however, provide an arena for women to begin to struggle for their liberation. It provides them initially with crucial economic independence. But while the socialisation of production provides a material basis for equality, this in itself is not sufficient. In order to forge more fundamental changes in the role of women, political leadership and participation in political processes are necessary. Collectivisation enables them to play an equal political role with their co-workers. This latter is crucial, as in this way it is possible to foresee the changing social relations of production that can lead to true equality. The jump that women must make from participation in the transformation of social production to actually wielding equal political power with men would seem to be a task far larger than can be accomplished by the collectivisation of family agriculture, the participation of women in co-operatives or the employment of women as wage labourers on state farms or in industry. The bridge that is needed to link these two elements is essentially political. And political mobilisation is key.

Change or superficial transformation in itself is not enough. This was argued during the armed struggle when the immediate need was to oust the Portuguese colonialists from their country. Fighting the war was not seen as an end in itself; the goal was not simply to replace the Portuguese administration with one run by Mozambican citizens, but to transform totally the society into a non-exploitative one, based on the government by the people. So while a war was under way, political mobilisation was energetically undertaken to make this long-term goal a reality. Similarly, after independence, while having become a major thrust, development in itself was not a sufficient goal. Development of a sort has taken place in many a neo-colonial neighbouring country, but has benefited a favoured
few and has not resulted in a new society. Choosing a socialist path has meant many hardships for the people of Mozambique, but potentially assures a future that will benefit the whole population and not simply a governing and privileged elite. Hence the raising of political consciousness goes hand in hand with the process of economic transformation.

Although FRELIMO has stressed its importance through the phases of revolutionary struggle, mobilisation seems to be curiously absent from a strategy proposed for the emancipation of women; it is implied rather than explicitly drawn out. With regard to women discussion of mobilisation centres on the need for them to join the general tasks of the current phase of the revolution. But political mobilisation expressly to fight for their rights as women and against the attitudes and customs that perpetuate women's subordination within the home and within the larger society is treated for the most part as secondary. It is interesting to note in this context that the OMM plan of action for 1981, setting the basis for the decade, focuses around the mobilisation of women to contribute to the fulfilment of the plan for the country as a whole. No sections of OMM's plan relate to women per se. There is a presumption that the problems that confront women by virtue of being women (such as polygamy or bride-price, which were so energetically attacked at the 1976 conference) will be taken care of if brought under the aegis of the development plans for the year or the decade. A sense of urgency seems to have diminished.

There appear to be two interconnected problems in FRELIMO's overall approach to the question of women's economic participation. The first has to do with the sexual division of labour and women's role within the household. The second concerns the restricted capacity for employing numbers of women, given limited industrialisation and nascent establishment of agricultural co-operatives in the country.

The sexual division of labour is a major fact in the heavy burden of women's work. In any effort to change the existing pattern of the division of labour (and by implication begin the process of releasing women from their subordinate role in society) two interlinked factors are crucial: (i) the need to ensure the full participation of women in production outside the home as well as their equal access to and appropriation of society's resources resulting from such production; and (ii) the need for both men and women to share domestic labour and responsibilities within the household, so that women can do the work outside the home.

It is precisely here that a contradiction arises out of the theory — as presented by Machel and FRELIMO — and the practice found in Mozambique. As we have seen, the first factor is regarded as fundamental. But because of the lack of emphasis on the interconnection of production and reproduction as far as women are concerned, the latter is not given necessary emphasis in the conceptualisation and implementation of practice.

This is not to say that it is ignored. Women's work load is recognised as an unfair burden, but as the sexual division of labour is not confronted as a structural problem, it is not dealt with strategically. For instance, in his first OMM speech, where Machel delineated the theoretical underpinnings for the emancipation of women, he identified two obstacles which present themselves in training cadres to lead the struggle for production: (i) obscurantism, superstition and tradition,
to be overcome by scientific study and participation in the practical tasks relating to production; and (ii) an absence of consciousness on the part of women of their own condition of double exploitation, with the principal weapons to overcome this obstacle being identified as political study, exchange of experience of sufferings and collective discussion. While these aspects need to be confronted in order to liberate women, the picture remains incomplete. The double workload is not placed on the list of obstacles, and the cause of such attitudes is not discussed.

Once the oppressive nature of women's work is recognised, how is it to be challenged? One way is to take some of women's work out of the household and collectivise it. Child care centres are seen as critical to help women workers and these have already been established by a number of factories, agricultural cooperatives, state farms, communal villages, government departments. But while this contributes to women's ability to leave their homes for many hours a day, it does not relieve them of the daily grind of cooking, house cleaning, evening child care, etc., that continues to be their responsibility.

While political mobilisation remains vital in encouraging women to take on men's role, the mobilisation of men for the reverse is absent. In fact, a demand for men to take on household chores equally with their wives is labelled as 'mechanistic' and described as something prevalent in the West where, as Machel states in his first OMM speech, 'the aim is to transform the contradiction with men into an antagonistic one'. Further in the speech he says that:

There is a profusion of erroneous ideas about the emancipation of women. There are those who see emancipation as mechanical equality between men and women. This vulgar concept is often seen among us. Here emancipation means that women and men do exactly the same tasks, mechanically dividing their household duties. If I wash the dishes today you must wash them tomorrow, whether or not you are busy or have the time. If there are still no women truck drivers or tractor drivers in FRELIMO, we must have some right away regardless of the objective and subjective conditions. As we can see from the example of capitalist countries, this mechanically conceived emancipation leads to complaints and attitudes which utterly distort the meaning of women's emancipation.

When I raised the question of the intensive nature of women's double work load with OMM leaders and other women, many felt it was unfair and a basis for continued inequality; but seldom did they speak of it as a problem that needed to be confronted through political mobilisation of men. Rather they believed that over time it would be dealt with, either by the provision of services that released time for women and/or by men offering to help their wives as part of the processes of becoming revolutionaries. Equal responsibility, as opposed to 'help', was seldom expressed as a goal for family life. Rather, women are encouraged to demonstrate their ability to do what men can do, in addition to their household work, by getting up earlier and going to bed later. Women, moreover, are discouraged from confronting their husbands in frustrated anger. OMM urges women to 'speak with kind words' to their husbands so as not to raise the ire of men who already find OMM threatening.

The conflict between women's role in reproduction and her increasing role in non-household production is evident as one travels through the country talking with women in factories, in communal villages, on state farms or in government ministries. But it is a conflict that might well in the end give rise to its own solution through the demands of women unable to cope with the pressures placed on their work and the expectations of their revolutionary commitment to the
development of their country.

For the emphasis on women's increased role in production is strong and has gone far to give many women opportunities in diverse kinds of work. Hence, positive advances are being made for women in this area and energy is being invested in encouraging women to take part in development as a whole in a way that surpasses the goals and achievements of most other Third World countries.

But this record is undermined by external factors and most importantly by a problem referred to earlier: that of underdevelopment of the economy as a whole. Lack of industrialisation means few jobs in factories. The limited number of state farms and the fact that agricultural co-operatives are in the early stages of development means scarce employment opportunities in the rural areas. This is further exacerbated in the southern provinces by the fact that the one major source of wage labour for males — the South African mines — has been substantially constricted. In most neo-colonial situations these circumstances would provide sufficient cause to discourage, even prevent, women from entering the wage labour force. 'Men must be given priority', is the repeated argument, until such time as the country is fully industrialised and has jobs that can be made available for women.

However, while there is in Mozambique a much lower proportion of women employed in factories and on state farms, and in skilled positions in the urban areas and small towns (within government ministries, for example), the official policy is to denounce this as unacceptable and to encourage a reversing trend. Further, there is a genuine commitment not only to providing jobs for women, but to ensuring equality at all levels of production in order to lead to deeper ideological understanding and a sounder knowledge of reality, of society and nature. This was reflected at the 1976 OMM conference when it was resolved that women 'must participate actively on an equal footing with men in all tasks of production, organisation, and planning. . . . learning tasks that were traditionally reserved for men.'

In keeping with such declarations, women are to be found in a great variety of positions; in the army (there is compulsory military service for both men and women, although women have more grounds for exemptions), and as miners, train drivers, auto-mechanics, police, carpenters, and tractor drivers.

Entrance into skilled positions is, however, still sorely hampered by lack of technical education and specific skills, as well as a basic lack of literacy. Attempts are being made to alleviate this by the provision of technical training to both men and women who fulfil the entry requirements. But participation by women remains low, not only because they lack these requirements, but also because many women have been either unaware of the existence of such training, lacked the self-confidence to apply or faced problems at home with their husbands or with child-care. The situation has since improved as a result of OMM taking on the task of publicising the courses and mobilising the women to attend.

More successful is a training programme organised by OMM to involve women in new positions that they never held before, and which takes into account the very low level of literacy among women. It is a crash apprenticeship programme designed to circumvent years normally spent at a technical training school so that women can learn skills and earn simultaneously.
However, while many women are taking on diverse and new roles, they still represent only a small proportion of the work force. In many cases, their presence is the exception, with the majority of these women, particularly in factories, entering the labour force well before independence. My interview’s with workers at three Maputo factories helped me gain a general profile of the female workforce. The three factories differed from one another in the skills demanded of the workers. At Investro, a clothing factory, where workers do piecework with the aid of sewing machines, a certain level of skill and training is required. Many had at least grade four education and their salaries, equal with their male counterparts, are among the higher level paid factory workers in general. Many of the women I interviewed had begun to work because of pressing economic need — desertion by a husband, an ailing parent or simply no other means of support and no relationship to the land. They were essentially urban dwellers. Most spoke of being in stable relationships and their husbands (de facto or legal) seemed content that their wives continue working. Most could tell me what their husbands — generally also factory workers at different plants — earned, although one commented spiritedly: ‘He says his salary is six contos, but how can we trust men?’

But more typical of the female workforce were those women I interviewed at a biscuit factory and a cashew factory. Relying on unskilled labour, they are the largest employers of women. In the latter, almost the entire labour force was female. In fact, the cashew factories provide virtually the only opportunity for large-scale employment of women. Almost without exception the women employed in these factories were single mothers. A number of the women I interviewed in the cashew factory, and a few in the biscuit factory, were driven by a desire to work to replay their lobolo as the only way of being released from an unhappy marriage — in some cases after they had been abandoned by their husbands in the first place. Many others were forced to work to support children fathered by ‘companheiros’, men that they considered partners, even though they had other wives. The few fathers that provided child support did this after the mothers had taken their cases to the local Justice Tribunals.

Given the extensive poverty that prevails among urban dwellers, it may seem surprising that more married women are not seeking employment to supplement family income. A number of factors influence this. Husbands continue to view women’s working as being solely within the home and in some cases prevent their wives from applying for work outside. In the rural areas where women contribute labour to family agriculture, this attitude is particularly pronounced.

For those women who do work in factories, new programmes are being established which ease their day. At those I visited, as well as many others, creches have been established. Women were chosen from the factory floor to train as day care workers and run the creches, both receiving the same pay. Most women, however, still preferred to arrange for their children to be cared for by relatives or older daughters.

At a growing number of workplaces, dining facilities and company stores are being established. The company stores are particularly helpful to working women by enabling them to avoid the long lines for basic provisions. However, at some workplaces — such as the Limpopo Valley Complex — the workforce is so large that I found women — either workers or wives and daughters of workers — lining up for many hours waiting to make purchases.
Whether single or not, one of the major problems associated with women workers is a high rate of absenteeism. This is particularly true for mothers, as most of the absenteeism is a result of problems relating to their children. After the creation of production councils in the factories, the rate of absenteeism dropped noticeably. But women who are consistently absent are fired and some factories — even state-owned factories — used this as a reason why they prefer to hire male workers.

While the continued scarcity of jobs means that the female workforce has not increased, either numerically or proportionately, salaries and working conditions have changed, as has the political role of women who are increasingly able to move into Production Councils, Party Cells at the workplace and OMM structures. This in turn has had a visible impact on the relationships between men and women workers. When I asked women why they worked, many included in their replies the satisfaction they derived from knowing that their work contributed directly to the development of their country. A number of women said that this in itself was enough reason to continue working even if, hypothetically, they found themselves in a financially secure situation. This is one indication of a raised political consciousness among women workers resulting in and reflecting raised political commitment.

Despite the difficulties and inevitable uneven progress in trying to integrate women more fully into wage-labour production, the Mozambican government and Party have made a sincere commitment to this problem. And this even when a dire scarcity of jobs for the population as a whole persists. The official policy has continued to emphasise that — as written into the constitution — ‘work is the right and duty of every citizen of either sex’.

If this continues as positively — and every indication is that it will — the contradiction between women’s work in reproductive labour and their work in the productive sector will be heightened. As the country develops, more jobs will become available to women and the problem will intensify. Because this goes hand in hand with political mobilisation and the raising of consciousness among men and women of women’s oppression, it is conceivable that women themselves will make the kind of demands needed to have an impact on government and party policy and lead men into sharing domestic labour.

Scientific and Cultural Education

The end of the year exams for literacy were in progress at Coca Massava communal village, in Chibuto district. The class sat under a tree, in a jagged semi-circle around their young literacy monitor. With notebooks on their laps, the students sat on the ground or on horizontal tree trunks — generally the women sat on the ground, the men on the trunks. Infants suckled at their mother’s breasts, toddlers grabbed at pencils or persistently tried to secure the attention of their mother or a classmate. But the children were ignored as the class sat in silence, each student buried in his or her own concentration. All their energies were directed towards the problem at hand. On a faded and chipped blackboard propped up against a tree, was written the arithmetical problem: 378 minus 49.

Those attending the exam had persevered against great odds. Hands that for years had wielded hoes and machetes and pestles, stiff and calloused from heavy manual labour, were now holding pencils and being coaxed in the delicate task of forming letters and numerals. The progress is slow for many reasons. Literacy is
taught in Portuguese, the only possible choice, but for most of the rural population, Portuguese is a foreign tongue. Classes are held after many hours in the fields, and students arrive tired and hot, with little other time to prepare their lessons. This being Gaza, there were more women in the class than men, but for the two hours which women spend a day in class, there must be someone to attend to their chores at home. Once in class, many older people find they cannot read the blackboard and discover that their sight is failing. As a result the older women and men often drop out. It is not surprising that few villages are able to meet the goals set by the literacy campaign for the number of residents completing each level each year. But for those who persevere, a new world begins to open.

A 50-year-old market woman, Adelina Penicela, enrolled in OMM’s first intensive literacy course in Maputo described this new achievement:

I began to learn to speak Portuguese with FRELIMO, with the OMM in its first literacy course. The course at first astonished me. We women in our 50’s who knew no Portuguese, when they called us to come eat, we couldn’t understand. We had to speak with gestures because we spoke only our maternal tongues. But after a month, we began to understand our first words. We learned many things — about our provinces, the largest river, the mountains. Before, we found each other strange, we didn’t mingle. But there at the centre we learned that we are all equal.

Such literacy classes are part of an effort to increase women’s access to scientific and cultural education as an essential element in the fostering of women’s participation at all levels of leadership and work. In speeches to the OMM conference quoted earlier, Machel stressed how the lack of access to such education undermines women’s advancement:

Science has always been kept as man’s monopoly, his exclusive domain, in the developed civilisations of the past as in capitalist society of today. To keep women away from science is to prevent them from discovering that society is created as a function of certain specific interests and that it is therefore possible to change society.

Referring in particular to women in the urban areas, Machel stated:

A great number of women in the cities exist effectively as domestics in their own homes. Depending on which predominates — the feudal ideas or the bourgeois conception of the home — their life resembles that of the peasant women or the colonial capitalist modes of the women in the home. But in one way or another, the woman at home is also marginalised and on the periphery of the essential problems of social life. The very nature of the work of the housewife determines her individualist conception of the world. Reduced to an existence of futility and unimportance, without opinions and without initiatives, she often becomes guardian to feudal or bourgeois prejudices, the principal vehicle for the transmission of tradition or religious obscurantism.

Education for women — both formal and within society in general — will free women from the web of ignorant beliefs and repressive values that bind them to their subordinate postion and will lead them on a path to struggle and participation in social transformation. The resultant new set of values and scientific knowledge that is internalised will be transmitted from mothers — seen as the first educators — to the next generation.

The emphasis on the need for women to be educated in the broadest sense of the word in no measure suggests that the majority of males were able to read and write. FRELIMO estimates that close to 98 per cent of the population were illiterate at the beginning of the war. FRELIMO’s education programmes begun
prior to independence in the liberated zones and continued in the mass literacy programmes launched annually since 1978, the literacy rate is now closer to 90 per cent. But the National Directorate of Literacy and Adult Education estimates that 60 per cent of those who cannot read and write are women.

While the constitution guarantees the right to education for all Mozambican citizens, there are insufficient resources to establish schools for the whole population. Schooling is therefore not compulsory, with the result that reasons leading to a smaller proportion of girls than boys attending school in Africa as a whole pertain in Mozambique as well: the economic reality, given the sexual division of labour, means that mothers cannot afford to part with the labour their daughters provide during the day; the attitudes that presume that girls, as potential wives, do not need education as they will be dependent on their husbands; the fact that many girls drop out of school in order to get married at a young age. Hence, one finds the enrolment figures for girls decreasing at each level. In 1979 for instance, the percentage of girls in primary school was 42.6 per cent; in secondary general, 29.1 per cent. A figure of 20 per cent for female students in secondary technical schools, however, is not discouraging when considering society’s attitudes to women taking up such positions and the fact that women often lack the required background in general education. Certainly genuine efforts are slowly being made to right the balance.

ILLITERACY RATES
Nearly two people out of every three illiterate in the world today are women.

| Region     | Women | Men | Total
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The OMM itself has placed particular emphasis on the literacy campaign and the establishment of literacy centres as means of increasing women's involvement. First priority for these centres goes to the OMM Secretaries of the Communal Villages who spend either three or six months away from their homes in an intensive course.

The heavy workload of the OMM secretaries, however, makes it well nigh impossible for them to attend classes on a regular basis and they quickly fall behind. This could be seen in Três de Fevereiro, for example, where the OMM Secretary, Leia Manhique had managed to finish the second class at the village adult education school, but had dropped out of the third class. She was not alone. The monitor for literacy told me that in 1981 the enrolment goal for a village of 160 had initially been surpassed with a total of 164 students coming at the beginning of the term. But, he lamented, by the end of the year, the exams had been cancelled. No one was attending classes. A special class had been established, however, for members of the village's structure such as the People's Assemblies, OMM secretariat members, the Youth Organisation and this, with 20 members (the majority women), had been functioning well.

One problem of the literary campaign is the chronic lack of adequately trained monitors. At a centre I visited for OMM secretaries in Gabo Delgado, the class was sitting in front of the blackboard learning by rote. The literacy monitor had chalked the sentence ‘A luta do Povo é Justica’ (the struggle of the people is just) onto the blackboard. The students repeated the words as she pointed to each one with long rod. No one noticed the ‘Povo’ was spelt ‘Pvo’.

Just how extensive the problems relating to literacy are was conveyed to me by my visit, at the end of 1980 to an OMM 'Experimental Centre', near Nampula, the capital of Nampula Province. The class was made up of women chosen by their village in each of the five northern provinces and their course was designed to educate them about nutrition. On completion they would return to the village and pass on what they had learnt to women there. It was a course designed for people with third or fourth grade education entailing note taking and the use of booklets which were handed out as reference once back in the villages. But for the two sessions of the course held thus far, none of the women who came were able to read and write. Clearly if they could, they would already have been absorbed in other work, and not free to give up four months for such a course. To compound the problem, the 20 women came from five different provinces, and spoke some seven different languages, none of which was spoken by the instructors who were from the south. And so the prospectus for the course was put aside and replaced by a three-month literacy course, with the hope of concentrating much of the training into the last month. My visit coincided with the end of the course, and in fact basic literacy was continuing. The centre has since been closed for reassessment and redesign. Meanwhile a similar centre built with the aid of UNICEF funds and benefiting from the experience of the first has been set up in Gaza, and was scheduled to open in 1982.

The problems affecting women at Coca Massava and other communal villages referred to earlier are to be found to a greater or lesser extent throughout the country, rural and urban areas alike. There are husbands who simply forbid their wives from attending classes; there are the women who feel too old to begin something so new; there are husbands who argue energetically that their wives do not have time because they must work in the home, but who really fear that
their wives will become smarter than they and 'get out of hand'. Or they fear that
given this freedom, their wives will meet other men and begin having affairs. If
the woman complains to OMM, members of the secretariat will try to speak to the
husband and urge him to change his mind. But this may well have no effect. Just
as often, the wife will say nothing and not challenge him. Despite the myriad of
problems — not only attitudinal but relating to lack of resources (teachers,
equipment, etc.) — OMM justifiably feels that significant inroads have been made
and that overall participation in literacy classes has greatly exceeded
expectations.

The New Concept of the Family
The family as it existed in Mozambique in pre-colonial and colonial times and
persists in much of the country today is considered by FRELIMO to be a major
obstacle to the achievement of equality between men and women. Practices such
as polygamy, bride-price (lobolo), child marriage, forced marriage and prohibition
on divorces for women are all intrinsically bound up with the structure of family
life and are considered detrimental customs that in time must be brought to an
end. Needed to replace it, says the Party, is a new concept of revolutionary love,
based on FRELIMO's political line. This concept was first expressed in Machel's
address to the 1973 OMM conference:

We must state here — and this is something new in society — that the family relationship,
the man-woman relationship should be founded exclusively on love. We do not mean the
banal, romantic concept of love which amounts to little more than emotional excitement
and an idealised view of life. For us, love can only exist between free and equal people who
have the same ideals and commitment in serving the masses and the revolution. This is the
basis upon which the moral and emotional affinity which constitutes love is built. We need
to discover this new dimension, hitherto unknown in our country.

In the process of discovering the new, the old has to be relegated to the past. It is
anything but a straightforward challenge. Transforming attitudes, though a
decided element in the process, is only a portion of the battle. It is necessary to
change the family structure, reaching deep into the foundations of the family and
out to the local rural economy. Polygamy, for example, has an economic base.
For the husband it means more workers to till the fields and hence the possibility
of accumulating wealth.

The main thrust of the campaign to bring an end to the practice is ideological —
through political education conducted by OMM and FRELIMO. To back this up,
certain restrictions have been placed on 'new' polygamists, denying them and
their later wives positions of responsibility on dynamising groups, in mass
organisations and in Party and government structures and disallowing their
candidacy for representative assemblies and councils at all levels.

In explaining FRELIMO's analysis of polygamy, the OMM second conference
report states:

In our patriarchal society, the man is the owner of all material goods produced within the
family. Polygamy is a system whereby the man possesses a number of wives. As head and
proprietor of the family, he acquires more wives to augment the labour force at his service.

The campaign has had the most success in communal villages, and in fact, this
reorganisation of economic and social life is seen as the most effective arena in
which to end the practice. In villages I visited in Gaza, for instance, women were
emphatic that no new polygamous marriages had taken place in their village since
its inception. Those who had wanted to be party to such a union had been talked out of it. My experience however, was that though much reduced, the practice still continued. Take the case of Juliana Caetano, who lives in a village in Namacurra district of Zambezia province.

Juliana Caetano married her present husband, her second, over 22 years ago. During that time they had one child, a daughter, who is now married to a district ‘responsible’ for FRELIMO and lives in the same village, Mutanga. They were one of the first families to move to the village in 1977, which by 1980 had increased to 236 families and was still growing. A new life opened to her when she moved; no longer was her house isolated from neighbours by miles; no longer did she have to walk over a mile to get water; no longer was she lonely. Now she works together with other women and men to build the village. She has close neighbours and feels their support, particularly the women. She has been active since she arrived, is a member of the People’s Assembly and will be the secretariat of OMM which she is helping to organise. Her pride in her village can be seen in her enthusiasm when speaking about the changes. She is proud of the new health centre that is being finished, the first cement structure in the village. She is proud of the consumer co-operative where necessities can be purchased so that long journeys do not have to be made to the store. There are the water pumps, driven by a manually operated wheel, schools for the children, literacy classes for the adults.

But, although proud, she is personally very unhappy. The fulfilment of impossible dreams has been painfully marred. Her husband, after 22 years of marriage, has taken a second wife. When she speaks of it, her face hardens with anger. At first, when the discussion with her and several other women from the village turned to polygamy, she sat close-mouthed; the other women were equally unresponsive. Occasionally they smiled sideways at each other, looked a bit uncomfortable, made comments under their breath, sometimes grinned, but kept silent. Juliana Caetano’s son-in-law who was translating from the local language into Portuguese, tried to coax them to speak of their feelings about polygamy. They would not. ‘They know very well what they think about polygamy,’ he said, ‘they don’t like it at all. But they are afraid to say this to visitors, as their husbands will hear and get very angry with them.’ Of the five women present, four were in polygamous marriages.

When the questions were phrased less personally, they began to respond. Yes, polygamy was still practised in the village, particularly by the younger men, they said. When the OMM talks to the men to try to discourage this practice, they will not listen. ‘This has nothing to do with you,’ they retort. ‘It is I who arranges the second wife and I who support her, not you.’

An old man who was listening offered his opinion. He is a Catholic and has one wife. ‘Sometimes a man takes another wife because his first does not bear him any children. But even when a man has many children he wants another wife. As long as he sees pretty faces, he wants more wives.’

Throughout this discussion, Juliana Caetano has said little. Her face still looked grim, but it also looked very hurt. Suddenly she broke into an impassioned speech, propelled by her antagonism towards her husband and his new young wife and the abandonment she felt.

Polygamy is bad. Very bad. Why do men want more wives? I am a women, just like the new
wife is a woman. Why does he want more than me? Sometimes when the first wife won’t accept this she quarrels with her husband. And he leaves and starts a new life with the second wife. It is hard on the first wife. A woman has to organise the house. Life is difficult and there is not enough — not enough food, clothes, other necessities. He can’t even support the one wife, how will he support two? But when a man has decided, the woman can do nothing. When a man takes two wives, each has her own house. But the first wife is left alone, alone. Her husband no longer takes good care of her, or even thinks about her.

Other customs that contribute to women’s unequal status within the family — lobolo, forced marriage, child marriage — have, like polygamy, been subjected to intensive political campaigns, with equally varied success. Lobolo, like polygamy, has an economic base. As pointed out in the second OMM conference,

This practice exists throughout the country. Its rationale is that it is compensation for the transfer of labour power from one family to another. This puts women in a situation of total dependence on men, who because they have paid for them, can use and disown them like mere objects.

Again, the most effective inroads against this custom have been made in communal villages. However, OMM now finds that it is often up against a new practice that is emerging to replace it. Instead of the negotiated and predetermined lobolo, husbands’ parents are passing on ‘gifts’ to the family of their future daughter-in-law to express ‘gratitude’ for having reared her as an appropriate wife for their son. As this is supposedly spontaneous, it is harder to bring to an end, but is often as interpreted by the bride’s parents as lobolo.

Two young men, recently married, whom I interviewed in Três de Fevereiro communal village told me that the parents of their future wives had told them what to bring as ‘gratification’. The gifts were to include cloth, a watch, a gold ring and other consumer items which appear to equal the value of the lobolo customarily exchanged in that area of the country. According to the perceptions of the men, this was not another form of lobolo, as the latter implied the establishment of an unequal relationship within the family. They criticised the custom of lobolo for the way in which it gave men power over their wives, reflecting what women told me: that husbands often hold the bride-price over their wives’ heads at times of strife. Gratification, these young men insisted, could not play the same detrimental role, and neither would it be returned in the event that the marriage broke down.

Although such customs continue, they seem to have declined since independence, markedly in certain areas. Mutanga village notwithstanding, the sharpest decrease has been in communal villages, particularly the areas where political mobilisation and commitment are more developed. A man’s need for more workers in the form of wives and children in rural Mozambique means that people will not readily relinquish the customs that guarantee these. This is more likely to happen when it is shown that an alternative way of life can provide answers to the problems that gave rise to such social devices in the first place. Once the required economic reorganisation has taken place, it might well be easier to change the attitudes that have acted as a force to hold such customary practices in place. It is therefore not surprising that the most widespread response to the political campaigns has been found in communal villages, where economic restructuring is under way and beginning to show results.

At the end of 1981, a new family law was in its final stages of revision and about to be adopted. One of the provisions expected to have particularly strong impact
is the recognition of common law marriages as legally binding after a simple registration. In conjunction with this is an insistence that men recognise and be responsible for all children they have fathered, whether they (the husbands) live with the mother or not. Already it is possible for women to take their cases to the children’s court or to the Justice Tribunal in their bairro in order to demand child support from the father. This is often organised directly through the man’s place of work, with the amount being held back from his salary and given directly to the woman each month. In other instances, the man has to send the monthly payment to the Tribunal, which in turn hands it on to the woman, in this way keeping track of whether he is meeting his responsibility or not. However, it is still the minority of women who resort to this or see this as their right. Public education that will surround the implementation of the new law will give publicity to this measure, and is likely to substantially increase women’s requests for child support, at least in the urban areas. It is likely to be less effective in the rural areas, but on the other hand such abandonment is less of a problem there. My visit to the three factories in Maputo showed just how widespread this phenomenon is in the city. It was not uncommon to interview a woman with seven or eight children, fathered by two or three different men, who each in turn had abandoned the mother once she became pregnant. At one factory, the Assistant Secretary of the Party Cell said she urged women to take such cases to the courts, as only then would men begin to think twice about the way they used and abused women.

Although common-law marriages are to be recognised, the law intends this to reflect a past and current reality in order to protect both women and children. The clear goal is that registered marriages should take place with a conscious commitment between the couple to each other and to the joint rearing of children. While the concept of equal rights and duties is stressed as a crucial principle for the new ‘revolutionary family’, however, the law offers no guidance as to how this should occur. Neither does it provide any constraints on negative conduct by men within the family or the possibility of redress for spouses who do not respect the spirit of the law. In this respect (at this stage) the law offers no help and the political education as generally outlined by OMM cadres at all levels leaves questions about the interpretations of the concept of equality.

As discussed earlier, the sexual division of labour within the household is seldom addressed as a problem that requires solving by means of greater participation in and responsibility for this work on the part of men. When asking OMM cadres how women must encourage change with ‘kind words’, patient encouragement and education of men were stressed. Women were told that it is incorrect to speak in anger. One example was described by Armind Hombe, the OMM secretary for the district of Chibuto, Gaza.

Perhaps a young wife has three children and is breast-feeding the youngest one evening. The two older ones are playing at her feet. Her husband just home from work sits in a chair engrossed in reading the paper. The wife tries to attend to all three children at once. Then the toddler messes on the floor. The husband does not notice or ignores the exasperation of his wife. She then turns to him and says, ‘Dear, our second child has dirtied the floor. As you see, I am feeding our youngest. Nutrition is extremely important for his growth, so it would be wrong to stop feeding to attend to the other’s needs. Would you mind cleaning it up?’ If she says this politely the husband will respond, and next time he will notice on his own accord and attend to it without being asked. This is how we explain to women at meetings the way to change men’s behaviour within the family.

Regularly, OMM leaders speak about how women must set an example within the
family. For only then, they believe, can men appreciate the heavy work load of the woman and try to help her with it.

Another aspect which has been given weight is women's role as educator within the family. The family is often referred to as the 'first cell of the Party' and as such plays a critical role in the development of the next generation of revolutionaries. It is the mother who is the dynamiser of this cell, the one responsible for nurturing good relations within it. Much emphasis is placed on how she fulfils this role. This is not insignificant. In African society women have long been the educators of young children and communicators of the values of society, as well as teaching them how to behave and work within the family and society at large. It is a role of enormous importance and responsibility, but it has been largely considered immaterial because it is tied to 'women's work'. So this emphasis is extremely relevant to the recognition of women's work and status in the process of transforming attitudes. In order to do this the liberation of women is essential. Machel points to this in his speech to the first OMM conference:

If we... consider the basic need for the revolution to be continued by the new generation, how can we ensure the revolutionary education of the generation which will carry on our work if mothers, the first educators, are marginal to the revolutionary process? How can one turn the homes of the exploited and the oppressed into cells of revolutionary struggle, centres for the diffusion of our line, encouraging the involvement of the family, if women remain apathetic to this process, indifferent to the society which is being built and deaf to the call of the people?

The question that is not generally addressed however, is whether the mother's role as educator in the family is viewed as a step towards equality of responsibility between husband and wife or whether it is an immutable fact. At this stage, emphasis tends to be placed on the latter.

For a young woman coming to puberty in a communal village, for instance, the changes to her role related to family life thus far are profound. She no longer has to enter into a marriage to a man — likely to be many years he senior — that has been predetermined by her parents. She can expect to be the only wife. She knows that OMM will help her at times of strife and that should she be maltreated by her husband, she has recourse to divorce. While, if she is militant, she will be stretching her energies to the limit to engage in all aspects of productive, political and reproductive work, she can look forward to the introduction of technological advances and to services to help lighten the load. She can demand the respect due to her as an equal member of the society and refuse to play the role of an inferior, dependent wife. This, along with her participation outside the home in income-producing labour (in agricultural or other co-operatives) provides crucial groundwork for her development into a self-confident and emancipated woman.

Crucial, but not quite sufficient. A major obstacle still endures: the sexual division of labour within the household. Only the most militant of women would be able to rise above the constraints perpetuated by such lack of focus. But the seeds of destruction are encased in such groundwork. The transformation that has occurred or is potentially possible may be itself the impetus needed to provide women with the resolve to struggle for a transformation that is total. Without it, the putting into practice of the concept of revolutionary and militant love would appear illusive.

The very nature of revolutionary process dictates that even upward and onward
progress is impossible. The process always throws up its contradictions, which in turn, once apparent can be dealt with. It is a slow process, often seeming to embody the 'two steps forward, one-and-a-half steps backwards' idiom in its fullest sense. The emancipation of women is an especially complex process, straddling as it does all facets of the revolutionary struggle, relying on progress in all fields for its own victories and falling victim to the failures that happen in other sectors.

And so, in assessing progress along the obstacle course to the emancipation of women, it would be both blind and naïve to expect great leaps forward in the five or six years following independence. Revolutionary progress is not blessed with miracles.

What is clear is that strides have been made, and that the impact of FRELIMO's policy towards the liberation of women has been felt by women throughout Mozambique. Without the backing of FRELIMO and OMM, this would have been impossible. The credibility given to OMM's work by the Party has meant that men, however reluctant, have had to reassess the role of women in the social, economic and political affairs of their immediate environment.

'The emancipation of women' is a goal voiced at all levels of the government and Party structures, and echoed in a variety of ways by women and men workers, peasants and students throughout Mozambique. The contradictions that emerge in the process have potentially within them the seeds of their own destruction. If in fact there is continued encouragement of women to enter men's fields of work, to take on political leadership, to become more educated, to broaden their vision of the world, to take a more active role in transforming production as wage labourers, as well as revalue their fundamental role in family agricultural production, then it would seem that women can only make more strident demands for further changes. In no small measure women carry the country through the provision of food for the majority of its people. They are a force to contend with. While definite progress is being made, only time will tell where the first early steps that are now being taken will lead. While avoiding romanticism, there is definite room for hope.
Women and Land Resettlement in Zimbabwe

Susie Jacobs

Peasant demand for land is one of the crucial issues determining Zimbabwe's strategy for agrarian transformation. Yet women's demand for land has been ignored. Susie Jacobs traces the development of gender divisions in pre-independence Zimbabwe and argues that current land resettlement models discriminate against women. Policies towards women are limited in scope and reinforce the domestic domain despite women's contribution to Zimbabwe's struggle. If a socialist strategy does not confront gender hierarchy, women's struggles will have to take on a new form.

Pre-colonial Economy and Society
The difficulties of describing gender relations and the position of women in pre-colonial Zimbabwe are, of course, profound. Our knowledge is distorted through the observations and practices of the period of colonial domination. What can be said here refers only to the socio-legal and economic institutions and processes which seem to have survived, or have been derived from, the pre-capitalist social formations and which present themselves as issues of women's struggle in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The economies of both the Shona and Ndebele peoples in the 19th century were based on subsistence production and dependent upon plentiful supplies of land. The household was the main unit of production and consumption and access to the means of production was regulated by seniority in the patrilineage system. Senior men/elders controlled the means of production and the labour of junior men and women, recruiting labour to the household through kinship and marriage. Production was organised on the basis of a strict sexual division of labour.

Amongst the Shona, the chief was caretaker and dispenser of land-use rights and each adult male who succeeded as household head had use rights to a given piece of land. Women did the bulk of farm labour yet throughout their lives obtained access to land only by virtue of their subordinate relation to men (of their own lineage, of their husband's lineage) who possessed rights to sub-divide land to women as wife/wives or inherited widows. Each wife had her own plot on the family-fields so sub-divided, on part of which she could produce a crop for her own use: amongst the Shona, groundnuts were typically a 'woman's crop'. But men possessed authority over land use and site placement, and over the surplus from family fields which could be converted into livestock and eventually into wives. Shona women were entitled to own livestock acquired from some of those
paid as bridewealth for their daughters or earned from practising as herbalists, midwives or beer-brewers but had no rights in their husband’s herds. Women were (and are) likely to lose access to fields allocated to them if divorced or if, as widows, they did not marry their husband’s successor.

Wives collectively were excluded from political authority. Women moved to their husbands’ households at marriage and the men of one village represented the political unity of that village in which women were strangers. Polygyny was permitted and common amongst those who could afford it: those who could accumulate the property necessary for the acquisition of further wives. Bridewealth payments were of paramount importance in the socio-economic relations of both Shona and Ndebele societies and the primary means of recruiting women and women’s children to the household. A woman acquired status from hard work and from bearing children, particularly sons. Upon divorce, she lost possession of her children as soon as they were old enough to manage without her care. Women, therefore, were not only excluded from direct access to the means of production but from the customary processes of recruiting labour through marriage or through permanent authority over their own offspring.

Husbands had exclusive sexual rights over their wives: wives none such over their husbands. A man, for instance, could divorce his wife for adultery but a wife could not, nor could she refuse her husband’s sexual demands. However, a woman could not be forced into marriage and did have the right to be consulted about such matters as her husband’s choice of further wives. She did have rights of disposal over ‘women’s crops’ and over the earnings acquired through the exercise of such skills as pottery and healing. Women could and did acquire respect, even renown, but this did not alter women’s generally subordinate relation to men. Under colonial domination, this relationship was confirmed or modified into one of permanent legal minority.

Settler Colonialism and Capitalist Agricultural Development
White settlers began to appropriate land belonging to Zimbabweans in the 1890s. The Ndebele economy was fairly rapidly undermined by European takeover of cattle and when raiding became impossible. Men were proletarianised more quickly than among the Shona and Ndebele women were left behind in barren rural areas. For a time the development of mines set a premium on food production and the Shona were able to market their crops to Europeans. Prior to 1904, European agriculture was insignificant and the African peasantry provided the bulk of foodstuffs. This was known as a time of peasant prosperity in which female labour in agriculture was intensified.

Zimbabwe, however, was soon found to be poor in minerals and once hopes of a second Rand had declined, attention was turned to the development of capitalist agriculture in the hands of a white rural bourgeoisie. The creation of an African farm labour force was accomplished in various ways. After unsuccessful attempts to impose forced wage labour, hut taxes were introduced from 1894. Since these did not, however, discriminate between incomes from wage labour and from sale of produce, Africans could increase cultivated acreage or intensify cultivation in order to meet taxes. As Ranger points out, Shona peasants resisted working for Europeans whenever possible and opted for cash-cropping. As was the case in other parts of Africa, it was men rather than women who were more
easily able to allocate land and labour to cash crops.

Land expropriation was the main means of solving European agriculture’s needs for land and for cheap labour: by 1902 three-quarters of African land had been expropriated. Various measures helped ensure that Africans would move on to less fertile reserves and, once this migration had taken place, their ability to obtain cash through sale of produce was jeopardised. The land division was legally enforced by the Land Appointment Act of 1930, which established exclusive European areas over half of the total land. Another major piece of legislation, the Maize Control Act of 1931, reduced Africans’ returns on their main marketed crop while subsidising returns to Europeans. As intended, African men were forced into wage employment in mines, agriculture and European households on a much larger scale. Women, children and elderly men were left behind in barren reserves.

Colonialism affected black women as members of an oppressed race but their experience of oppression differed from that of men. Largely excluded from wage labour, women became the life-long victims of colonial ‘policy’ towards the Tribal Trust Lands as the African reserves were called. Colonial rule confirmed certain practices of customary land tenure, in particular maintaining women’s exclusion from direct access to land. Women struggled to maintain their own subsistence and the conditions of existence of a migrant male labour force while encapsulated in a rural economy and society in which their status remained subordinate to absent husbands.

There were, indeed, some legal changes under colonialism which modified women’s position. African women were confirmed as legal minors. They were allowed to marry under customary law to which some minor modifications were made. The betrothal of girls under 12 was deemed illegal and women were entitled to redress if forced into marriage against their will. Women could file for the divorce of an impotent husband. But the status of legal minor was extended into domains in which previously women had had a certain degree of independence: under colonial law, married women were not entitled to keep their wages while there has been increasing confusion at divorce over their entitlement to any property, such as cattle, which they might have accumulated.

Minor changes in African women’s legal status, however, were less significant than the consequences of the general deterioration in black people’s political and economic position through which gender relations were affected. Alterations in the sexual division of labour, for instance, placed a greater burden on women. The ‘feminisation’ of subsistence agriculture arose as a consequence of male migration and of the enforced change from a system of shifting cultivation to one of sedentary agriculture. The establishment of permanent arable and grazing areas reduced men’s work of clearing the land but increased women’s labour in the struggle to produce crops from soils of declining fertility. It added to the time involved in fetching wood from further afield while their labour was further required in caring for livestock. Although women could market their groundnut crops, the poor and limited amount of land in the reserves and the sheer burden of maintaining production of subsistence crops meant that the potential of this source of income for women remained small. Rural women became increasingly dependent for part of their basic subsistence and for any disposable cash income upon cash remittances from husbands engaged in wage labour.
The colonial agricultural ‘policy’ towards the reserves until the 1940s created a class of mainly male worker-peasants and marginalised women in agricultural subsistence production. From the 1940s until independence, more direct intervention into the agricultural systems of the TTLs contributed to the development of some class differentiation among the African peasantry, bringing about in its wake consequences for African women. There were, first, some attempts to establish a layer of middle peasants and/or a kulak class. A ‘master farmer’ scheme to train Africans in ‘proper’ agricultural techniques was introduced (official anxiety which bordered on hysteria blamed soil erosion on Africans’ ‘poor’ farming methods). Married women were occasionally able to obtain such certificates but in general master farmer status was confined to men, more especially those considered politically co-operative. Purchase Areas were also established on 8 per cent of the land area in response to demands from aspiring peasant entrepreneurs. Here, women were not only excluded, in general, from capitalist ownership rights, but such capitalist farming as did take place was highly dependent upon women’s unpaid labour. Cheater’s research showed that polygyny in these areas, where a better off 3 per cent of the black population lived, was more widespread than elsewhere. About half of all marriages were polygynous as men used marriage as a device for securing labour and exerted strict control over their wives. Junior wives appeared to be treated virtually as labourers.

Another intervention into the system of rural production which had emerged since colonialism was aimed at establishing a permanent peasantry and a settled proletariat. Since the preservation of customary land tenure had been intended to ensure a migrant labour force which retained its rights in land, the obverse was to replace customary tenure by providing persons with individual titles to land and creating a rural land market. By the logic of its own argument, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 was to enable men to obtain individual rights in land. This measure increased landlessness and encouraged class polarisation in the rural areas. It was, however, abandoned with the victory of the Rhodesian Front in 1962. The system of reserved land under customary tenure and of migrant labour was reinforced.

The development of Rhodesian capitalism failed, on the whole, to create class differences of an extreme nature within the peasantry. It did, however, we argue, deepen other divisions, notably those between women and men. The role that capitalism has assumed with regard to women’s subordination has varied enormously. Although it is (rightly) unfashionable to claim that capitalism created gender divisions, it is common to claim that it inevitably perpetuates such divisions, albeit in new forms, and equally common to claim that it creates the prior conditions for overcoming gender divisions. In what sense did capitalism in Rhodesia deepen gender divisions and what conditions, if any, have been created for overcoming those divisions under the present ‘socialist’ strategy for agrarian transformation?

Capitalism in Rhodesia did not ‘free’ most black women either to become members of a proletarian class or from the pre-existing gender hierarchy. Capitalist development reinforced geographical, economic and ideological divisions between rural women, the majority of whom remained in the reserves, and men. Female labour in subsistence agriculture (and in the informal urban economy which some women entered) was crucial in maintaining the
characteristically low labour costs of peripheral capitalist economies. Women’s marginalisation in reserves facilitated the social reproduction of a particular type of migrant labour system. Women have also provided the unpaid labour in such African capitalist farming as was permitted to develop.* Indeed, it is possible to consider such class differentiations as did emerge in the African rural economy in terms of the different position of women within each category.

There were no accurate data concerning peasant ownership, production or distribution in Zimbabwe at the time of Independence as the Riddell Commission Report emphasises. However, Riddell states elsewhere that black per capita land ownership probably averaged around 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) hectares, three-quarters of which was in the unproductive drylands regions. The average, however, conceals considerable variation. Purchase Area farmers constitute a rural petty bourgeoisie heavily reliant on female family labour. Amongst the landholding peasantry in the TTLs, Riddell estimated at least a twenty-fold size difference in plots cultivated. The ‘wealthiest’ peasants, almost invariably ex-migrants, were generally master farmers, some of whom employed labour although not on a large scale. Households with one or more members employed in wage labour formed the next stratum. The bulk of these were households in which subsistence production was ensured by women but income from migrant male labour supplied the external conditions for household reproduction. These ‘worker-peasant/farmer housewife’ households (using Bush and Cliffe’s terminology) were probably the most numerous. Such households reproduced themselves within two forms of production; men and women placed mainly in one or the other.

The most impoverished peasant households were those with no outside employment and which had to rely entirely upon subsistence farming. The harsh conditions in the former TTLs made social reproduction of a household difficult to achieve without outside wages. Almost certainly, most female-headed households fell into this category. In Zimbabwe, female-headed households were only so defined if the woman was single, widowed, divorced or permanently separated — that is, if no male were present even on a temporary basis. In Muchena’s sample, nearly 10 per cent of women in the rural areas were household heads even by this definition. Many women had been widowed during the war, but marital instability arising from male migration was the main reason given for the position of such women. These households, most of them with tiny holdings, female headed or not, may be classified as ‘poor’ peasant households in the sense that they were unable to reproduce themselves. Female-headed households lack security of access to the means of production and lacked control over labour for their future reproduction.

A final category of class differentiation included the landless. One study by Brand suggested that 4-11 per cent of rural households were landless. A high proportion of such households were probably headed by widows or divorced women who had lost access to land of any kind.

It cannot be over-emphasised that no matter to which category of peasant household a woman belongs, women performed, and continue to perform, most agricultural labour. In addition to the tasks assigned in the customary sexual

*Women also provided something like 25 per cent of the wage labour on white capitalist farms, which are not considered in this paper, according to D.G. Clarke, 1977.
division of labour, women with absent husbands have often had to assume tasks which were previously performed by men such as ploughing and herding livestock. Callear found in Wedza Communal Area that women did an arduous range of tasks including child-care, collecting fuel and water, grinding cereal crops, taking cattle to dips, guarding against baboons and so on. Muchena found that a woman’s day during the farming season would begin at 4.30am and end around 9.00pm, with approximately one-and-a-half-hour break.

**WOMEN’S WORK IS NOT RECOGNISED**

National statistics for the economically active usually omit women’s work in the subsistence sector yet:

* In the Himalayan region 70% of agricultural work is done by women

* In Africa 60–80% of all agricultural work is done by women

* Rural women in the developing countries as a whole account for at least 50% of food production

Yet however much of the farm work they do, women remain subordinate to the authority of husbands or other males as landowners. Muchena found that men frequently took decisions such as which crops were to be grown and sold. A significant minority of the women she interviewed felt so strongly about this lack of autonomy that they would have preferred to retain the migrant labour system in order to retain the degree of autonomy which it offered them. Callear found that where men were labour migrants, women nearly always took decisions such
as when to begin preparing land. She also found that even when husbands were present, women actually had more decision making powers than they recognised and it may have been an ideology of deference which led them to believe that they were powerless.

Anger over the discrepancy between actual responsibility and subordinate status is a reflection of women’s continued absence of rights in wealth and property accumulated by husbands as household heads on the basis of women’s labour. The two legal forms of marriage in Zimbabwe are defined by the Marriage Act (‘civil marriage’) which must be monogamous and the African Marriages Act (‘customary marriage’). The African Marriages Act, however, specifically excludes black women entering into ‘civil marriage’ from attaining legal majority while their property rights are defined by customary law recognised in ‘customary marriage’. Customary law has usually been interpreted to exclude women from rights in their own earnings (eg wages) or has facilitated abuse of women’s ownership of property such as cattle. Moreover ‘customary marriage’ is only legal when it has been registered and a certificate obtained. Registration usually follows the completion of all bride-wealth payments which is a date largely determined by a woman’s father or legal guardian. Some 40 per cent of marriages may not be registered and until recently such a wife remained the ward of her guardian, whether or not she was providing labour and sexual services to her husband, and consequently with very indeterminate property rights.

Rhodesian development can hardly be said to have equalised the position of black women with that of men, yet capitalism has both reinforced and undermined gender hierarchy. The distortion of pre-capitalist modes of production in the reserves towards the reproduction of male labour for capitalist employment weakened the patrilineage despite the attempts to retain customary systems of land tenure and to preserve the political functions of male chiefs. Women, as a result, acquired more informal control over household resources and surveys have shown that rural husbands, as household heads, felt that their authority over wives had been undermined. Women’s labour burden had increased, partly as the result of absent male labour and partly because of the declining resources of the reserves. Divorced, widowed or with absent husbands, women remained unable to recruit labour to establish rural households capable of reproducing themselves without male wage remittances. Absent males gave women a degree of autonomy in decision making. But this autonomy itself was experienced as material and emotional deprivation by most women. A few women in communal areas had been able to establish themselves on their own account with small businesses or as 'master farmers' yet the majority of women had not been able to realise their enforced separation from men as any desirable independence, hence demands in independent Zimbabwe for family reunification.

The experience of colonial capitalism was almost uniformly oppressive yet it gave women perhaps some room for manoeuvre while their role in the civil war and struggle for independence led to greater political influence in the formulation of socialist strategy. How then are gender divisions to be overcome in contemporary Zimbabwe?

Women, Land Resettlement and Problems of Transition

The ecological, economic and political situation the government faced at
independence made land reform a priority. The land resettlement programme was the most concrete manifestation of the pledge made by the liberation movement and later by the new government to restructure Zimbabwean society. There was surprising consensus on this point from various interests. The peasantry’s main aim during the war was the desire to regain its ‘lost lands’, and the fact that ZANU actually waged a struggle for land clinched its support among them. However the white farmers union, the CFU, also concurred in supporting some degree of land reform. By 1979 white capitalist farmers recognised that some of the peasantry’s demands would have to be met, and also that the emergency of a black petty-bourgeoisie could no longer be prevented. But they wished for a limited and orderly transfer of land, in which property rights were recognised and compensation paid.

Land resettlement, then, has been a showpiece of government policy. And it is regarding land policy that any hopes of a socialist ‘solution’ have been voiced. There is no socialist organisation in industry, and indeed strikes and workers’ organisations have been suppressed. Land itself is still half white-owned and commercial agriculture will be protected for the foreseeable future. Peasant land resettlement is, nevertheless, officially envisaged in terms of socialist objectives. As in other socialist agricultural strategies, agrarian reform is conceived of as the first ‘stage’ in a series leading up to the establishment of state farms.

Three categories of persons were initially defined as eligible for selection for resettlement. These were (i) refugees and people displaced by war (ii) the landless and (iii) those with insufficient land to maintain themselves and their families. Five models of resettlement have been proposed since 1981, of which only two (Models A and B) have been extensively implemented and are described briefly below.

Model A: Individual Family Farming: This model involves village settlements with individual ‘family’ land allocations of five hectares apiece, with valuable livestock grazing rights on communal grazing areas. Each male settler is allocated a residential plot within the village with a small garden plot. This is similar to existing patterns of land use in the tribal areas, although a major difference is that arable boundaries will not be fenced off: this might permit later collectivisation.

Model B: Co-operative Farming: Model B is based upon co-operative farming and (eventually, perhaps) communal living. In this model there are no individual holdings: land is to be worked communally, although livestock is to be owned privately. Settlers are required to reside together on the co-operative farm. The co-operative is also to be established as a legal entity. A central objective is to enable poorer peasants to become more productive by providing resources such as land tillage, equipment and credit: initial state management would give way to farmers’ committees. The model is seen as particularly suitable for large-scale enterprises, for resettling refugees and young unmarried people with no land rights. Co-operatives are also envisaged by some as the main basis for a future, socialist transformation of agriculture.

Progress in Resettlement
Resettlement at first proceeded fairly slowly, but the pace has progressively quickened. In May 1981, land bought had amounted to 200,000 hectares and about 1,500 families or 10,000 people had been resettled. By March 1982, about
8,600 households had been resettled on 520,000 hectares and a total of 750,000 hectares had been acquired for resettlement. Roughly 10 families a day had been resettled over the period in which the programme was being organised, staff recruited and initial experience acquired. Since then the pace had accelerated: by April 1983, 21,000 families had been resettled and 33,000 were to be settled on land then in hand. Following the budget cuts of July 1983, however, the programme has slowed down.

Kinsey asserts that the pace of resettlement has been in itself an achievement, yet it has thrown up its own problems, most notably a lack of planning and preparation. One obvious problem is that land tenure policy is unresolved. Settlers occupy holdings under various permits which govern residence, planting of crops and grazing of livestock. These permits are the equivalent neither of leases nor of title deeds, convey no real security and appear to be open to abuse and political pressure. The period of validity of the permits is unspecified, yet the permit contains reference to the possibility of renewal; the permit may be revoked for a wide variety of reasons by the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development. In these circumstances, it would be surprising if settlers did as they are meant to do and renounced all rights in communal areas: it is reported that many settlers do not.

Other aspects of the current situation of ex-Tribal Trust Land peasants also appear to be exacerbated rather than alleviated by the current resettlement programmes. Settlers may reside far away from economic services, such as marketing facilities, or social services such as schools and clinics. The promised building of infrastructure, particularly water supplies, has not yet materialised. Some farmers initially lacked seed and implements and many more lacked draught power. The absence of provision of credit to buy inputs in the first year of resettlement prevented many from farming much at all. The situation has improved for men but lack of access to credit continues to affect women particularly severely.

While there remain ambiguities about the permanence or other of men's rights in land in the resettlement areas, the major problems as far as women are concerned has been their exclusion from access to land in their own right. With the exception of widows who, unable to gain access to land through husbands, may be granted half the amount of land due to a married man, the resettlement of families has perpetuated women's customary lack of land rights. For women, access to land has remained conditional upon their marital status.

Women have expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction with their continued lack of rights over land. This sentiment was widely voiced in a Zimbabwe Women's Bureau rural needs survey. Women were frustrated that only men could fill in application forms for resettlement and felt that their contribution to Zimbabwe's struggle had been unacknowledged, as this statement illustrates:

Why is it that only the names of men who have taken courses and have qualifications are being taken for resettlement? We women have also taken some courses but (the resettlement officers) are not taking our names. So it means that we women are not counted in any development activities being undertaken in Zimbabwe. We struggled much to win this Zimbabwe, but it seems that our Government has forgotten that, and it is not interested in women's development and needs.

The extent to which women have individually been excluded from rights to land
as a result of discriminatory processes such as these and others is uncertain. However, it is clear that the absence of legislation overturning customary land tenure practices discriminating against women in general is bitterly resented. The UNICEF survey carried out by Muchena indicated that women were nearly unanimous in their desire for land rights. Ninety-nine per cent of women as well as many men wanted the past land tenure system abandoned or modified. Women commonly described men’s behaviour in controlling land and women’s labour on it in emotive language calling them ‘exploiters’ or ‘bloodsuckers’.

The Squatter’s Movement
Peasants themselves have often expressed dissatisfaction concerning the slowness of resettlement. The main response to the situation has been a widespread squatter’s movement. There are no current figures for numbers of squatters, but the phenomenon continues on a very large scale, and the numbers involved are much larger than those provided for under the official resettlement programme. Squatters have in general taken over vacant and unused lands, although some white land in current use has been settled. It also appears that a minority of squatters are businessmen who take over an area to rent out plots to the landless.

Government response to squatting has been ambiguous. Squatters are not easily ignored, particularly because squatting has grass-roots support in some ZANU branches and because squatters are often well organised. Government is also under pressure from other quarters to remove them. In addition to the objections of white farmers which are to be expected, the newly-forming class of black landowers has protested against squatting. In January 1982, the first court decision to evict them was taken and other have followed although there has been reluctance to implement court orders.

In late 1981, the Accelerated Resettlement Programme was launched on an emergency basis. It is a response to squatting but one also aimed at regularising and controlling it by settling people on odd plots of land on the edge of former TTLs without having to provide infrastructure.

Co-operative Resettlement
The extent of resettlement along co-operative lines contrasts sharply with the extent of squatting and of individual family resettlement. The latter has proceeded fairly rapidly and been outpaced by squatting but the extent of co-operative formation has been very limited, in spite of official support.

Approximately 5 per cent of farms purchased have been earmarked as co-operatives though there are debates as to whether this percentage should be increased. Most co-operatives in Rhodesia were marketing rather than production co-operatives. Owing to their marketing function and to the fact that men controlled most cash crops, their membership was almost entirely male. However, a few production co-operatives did exist prior to independence and are now being reconstituted. Some 23 production co-operatives (Model B) have been set up under government schemes, mainly large-scale units based on former European farms. There are also co-operatives attached to non-governmental agencies such as Silveira House. Other co-operatives have been formed by ex-combatants. There is one women-only co-operative which includes craft production. Another new scheme is attempting to raise child nutrition standards
through the production of crops such as groundnuts. The land must be worked co-operatively and most participants are women.

Non-governmental co-operatives have often been more successful than official ones. Some co-operatives have difficulty obtaining capital and a climate of suspicion has often been fostered against them. According to the Zimbabwe Project Newsletter in 1981, for example, it was whispered that the communality of living extended to sexual communism, a charge which in fact pre-dated the present establishment of co-operative movements by the white regime. Attacks on co-operatives through allegations of sexual communism indicate, however, one ideological dimension of women's problems in liberating themselves from male control.

Another reason for the slow development of co-operatives is externally imposed. As European farmers produce over half of Zimbabwe's agricultural produce, both government and Western aid agencies are anxious to see these large units preserved. The Ministry of Lands would prefer that they continue as state farms or as large collectives. Others in the country and in the international aid fraternity would prefer them to be transferred to a black capitalist class. Mupawose and Chengu, in fact, report that by 1982 land was beginning to be acquired by black entrepreneurs on a much larger scale. These too can be expected to oppose vigorously any collectivisation, as the Ministry of Lands has recently recognised.

Of the many problems emerging from the resettlement programme, three stand out. One concerns the conflicting effects of the pace of resettlement. Although massive in terms of similar programmes and of numbers resettled, nevertheless the speed of settlement is widely perceived as inadequate and by no means satisfies rural people's land hunger. Popular pressure caused the government to
concentrate for a couple of years on the resettlement of as many people as possible with some neglect of other provisions. A linked problem is that the situation of those left in communal areas has so far been largely ignored and their material existence remains as before the war. There are no plans at present to restructure these areas.

A second problem is acknowledged by some in Government, if not officially. By resettling people on an individual family basis, the government may be sowing the seeds for class differentiation within the peasantry and, beyond that, to the development of a black landholding class. The further growth of the latter could undermine the basic aims of resettlement. The intention announced by Government in July 1982 to include master farmers in resettlement may be an ominous sign of this trend.

A third problem is that, to date, the female majority of the population has directly benefited little from the resettlement programme.

**Women and Resettlement**

The Model A resettlement programme is based on the individual farm family. Land is no longer controlled by patrilineages nor allocated by elders yet customary practices of land tenure survive in the allocation of land to male household heads. While some women other than widows have gained access to land on such schemes, the principle of family settlement discriminates against women’s land ownership in theory and in practice. Male household heads are likely to continue to depend largely on family/female labour which may in turn exacerbate gender divisions. Men still maintain control over the main mechanism of recruiting labour to the household through bride-wealth and control over children.

No studies as yet have been carried out of the emerging patterns of family settlement, yet there are indications that the schemes were conceived in terms of male household head/female farm labourer/housewife. This can be illustrated by a consideration of the fact that a policy of ‘reuniting families’ was behind Model A. From a Western feminist perspective which sees the family under capitalism and in socialist societies as the main site of women’s oppression and subordination, a socialist strategy which seeks to (re)-establish the family as the basic social unit without a prior transformation of gender relations is suspect. Family reunification in Zimbabwe, however, arises from different and passionate demands. Zimbabwean women, who have suffered years of separation from male (and female) kin as a consequence of the migrant labour system and of war, desire reunited family life. In Muchena’s survey, for instance, one of women’s demands was to make rural areas economically viable so that families could live together. The demand for united families is real, but the effects are already being experienced as contradictory and may not contribute to the realisation of women’s other demands developing through struggle. Reunited with their families, men are likely to reassert control over women’s farm labour and domestic services in the absence of any strategy for radical transformation in the gender hierarchy of family production and redistribution.

Such an approach marked the first years of resettlement. For instance, the ZIMCORD aid conference in 1981 talked of encouraging ‘dependents’ to settle near breadwinners. Women whose husbands were permanently employed in the urban sector were not entitled to resettlement but encouraged to settle with their
husbands. Breadwinners were assumed to be male, dependents — female. A statement by the Deputy Minister of Lands in The Herald at the end of 1981 echoed the same theme:

We cannot give land to the employed since they will not have time to work that land . . . At the moment they have a lot of land belonging to the unemployed, lying idle . . .

The category ‘unemployed’, astounding in the circumstances, subsumed most women. Families were to be reunited and resettled on the basis of a male household head with female dependents whose role in production was ignored and whose status as dependents was apparently to be reinforced. Undoubtedly, women’s workload would not have been reduced by being reclassified as dependents!

Technically, women can join co-operatives (Model B) as individual members since they were intended in part to provide for landless and single people. It is unclear, however, how far this is actually taking place except perhaps in the case of widows. It does seem clear that many co-operative members are not single and that normal procedure has been for wives of members to be asked whether they would like to join. When asked about women’s membership (in 1981), people responded with some puzzlement. Female membership was often seen as intrinsically dependent upon marital status even in socialist enclaves. There is now, however, at least one co-operative with a majority of women members, most of them married.

If family resettlement has been planned on the basis of male-headed households and co-operatives have not yet adjusted to the needs of women to gain access to land in their own right what, in fact, have been government policies towards improving the status and relieving the burdens of rural women? Women’s concerns — or what are defined as their concerns — are the responsibility of the Ministry of Community Development and Women’s Affairs. The Women’s Affairs Section sponsors various Home Economics type programmes and small-scale industries for women rather than programmes directed towards women as agricultural producers. The segregation of women’s issues under the administration of this Ministry from the business of peasant production which falls under the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development has real as well as symbolic significance. The MCDWA is in a weak position. Although its creation did signal official concern for women’s low status and acknowledged their participation in the war, it is still seen as an ‘inferior’ Ministry and its lifetime may be limited. Already threatened, it is not inclined (and would probably not be able) to disrupt the system of male domination under which woman live.

One of the responsibilities of Woman’s Affairs are savings clubs. These are spontaneously organised associations of subsistence producers for the raising of credit. Their membership is almost entirely female. They were previously independent of Government but now fall within the ambit of the Ministry which will undertake to locate funds for educational, development and income generating projects. These are defined as (a) self-reliance projects which emphasise the participation of women; (b) development projects that contribute to the raising of standards of living e.g. handicrafts, poultry raising; (c) projects to give shelter and food to women and children evicted from their homes; (d) projects offering courses on leadership, co-operative work, child-spacing and preschool activities; (e) projects promoting Zimbabwean culture.
Typical activities under (b) have been to support, or find support for, women's dress-making clubs and co-operatives producing school uniforms. These provide a community service and may provide an income for women independent of the family farm if they succeed in realising a reasonable cash return to women's labour. However, women's involvement in such activities is an addition to the long hours of work they already spend in productive and reproductive labour in male-headed or their own households. These activities may be seen as substitutes for the income from 'women's crops' of the pre-colonial period. They do not, however, challenge the present sexual division of labour in peasant household production which remains dependent upon the presence of female labour nor the gender hierarchy in the control and distribution of peasant farm income.

Other programmes sponsored by Women's Affairs emphasise women's domestic labour and responsibilities towards the maintenance and reproduction of culture and community. Women's incomes realised through small projects are specifically intended to be used, for example, to improve child nutrition in which women, but not men, receive instruction. Women on resettlement schemes receive instruction and education in nutrition, homemaking skills and family planning. Such programmes may improve rural women's knowledge, and so the efficiency with which they can plan in the domestic domain, their responsibility for which is being reinforced.* Women, however, do not necessarily lack knowledge of nutrition but the resources or the ability to redirect household (male) income for these purposes.

Family planning/child spacing programmes may give women some control over reproduction and sexuality and could lighten their burdens of child-care and support. However, Zimbabwean women are highly dependent upon the labour that their young children can provide in production and in servicing men. Childless women are not only bereft of any labour to command but tend to be socially ostracised, while childlessness is a common cause of divorce. Women's general health is poor, the incidence of malnutrition and of veneral disease is high and pelvic infections are common. Barrenness is more of an issue of personal tragedy than 'too many' children.

Moreover, even when it is to the advantage of rural women to limit child-bearing, family planning as an agency and as an issue is viewed with suspicion because of the way it was promoted by the former white regime. Contraception was misused as a form of racist population control and even if this is not the case now, the pill is dangerous and infections and lack of medical facilities limit the use of IUDs. Abortion is illegal (except for medical reasons), is little discussed and most strongly disapprove of it. Men's attitudes to contraception are generally hostile and therefore preclude the use of most other possible methods. 'Family planning' has not and cannot challenge male control over women's sexuality and reproduction nor male prerogatives of sexual access to wives.

Editors note: Their tendency to reinforce the domestic rather than productive role of women in Zimbabwe was referred to by veteran community worker Comrade Chiranga in the first issue of *Community Action* (Third Quarter, 1983: No.1) published by MCDWA in Zimbabwe, who commented that some women in the dress-making clubs 'Just want to gain skills so that they can cook or sew for their families' (p.8). The range and objective of activities sponsored by Women's Affairs in Zimbabwe is almost identical to those undertaken by the Women's Section of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in non-socialist Kenya: see Feldman in this issue.
The packaging of women's issues under the Women's Affairs Section of MCDWA seems arbitrary and inchoate. On the one hand, 'women's issues' have been hived off, defined as those concerned with reproductive labour and with 'marginal' economic enterprises which denies women's major contribution to agricultural production. Women's much needed access to land, agricultural technology, extension and credit on or off settlement schemes has not been provided because such access is not seen as the business of those Ministries which do provide these facilities. On the other hand, if the importance of small-scale production and marketing, the servicing of rural communities and reproductive labour in socialist Zimbabwe are to be properly recognised, they need to be handled in a framework which does not marginalise them from agrarian transformation as a whole.

The Ministry has challenged women's subordination in Zimbabwe rather more directly in the pursuit of legislation in favour of women's equality. Inheritance laws are being altered so that a wife may inherit her deceased husband's property. Under customary law, property goes to the husband's kin and the continuation of this practice along with the decline in that of widow inheritance has meant that widows have been amongst the most destitute in Zimbabwe. Secondly, the Legal Age of Majority Act was passed in December 1982 which made (black) women over the age of 18 for the first time legal majors, entitled to their own property, obtain credit and marry without their parents' consent. However, legislation has not been passed to amend the discrimination against women embedded in the African Marriages Act. At the present moment, single women and women in unregistered marriages retain their legal majority status, but women in customary registered marriages still possess no rights in household property. What the legislation signifies in improving women's access and title to land is not clear. Women will be permitted to buy and own land in their own right but in the communal and resettlement areas there is no market in land and no clear alternative means of access to land for women. Access to land is now formally in the hands of District Councils rather than by Chiefs, though in practice it is delegated. Women are entitled to election on the Councils, and some have been, but it is not yet clear how political representation will shift the prevailing practice in favour of the allocation of land to male heads of households.

Conclusion
The first section of this paper tried to outline the effects of capitalist development in Rhodesia, taking into account particular effects upon black women. It followed the literature in arguing that the situation of underdevelopment and general impoverishment created within the reserves was so severe that class differentiation within the peasantry was limited. While some class differentiation did and does exist, probably the most marked divisions created within the rural black population were based on gender. Gender divisions existed prior to colonisation but they were deepened via a system of labour migration which marginalised women in subsistence agriculture. Here the capitalist state preserved a non-capitalist form of production in which women's labour and reproductive capacity was of greater significance than in the capitalist sector proper. This system also accounts for the continued importance of tribal law and custom in determining women's legal states.

The paper has further argued that the resettlement programme, the main government policy with regard to land and the peasantry, has thus far continued
to marginalise women. Most peasants are resettled along individual family lines; this model perpetuates the existence of a landholding peasantry and thereby, the importance of household production. There is a possibility that a government strategy of supporting co-operatives would weaken the impact of household production, but this cannot be a foregone conclusion. Women may make some gains within formal co-operatives, but these are unlikely to be far-reaching.

There do exist indigenous traditions of co-operation in Zimbabwe, however, which could be significant for co-operative or for collective organisation. Such traditions were subverted by the colonial régime which exploited them in programmes of community development, commonly regarded as forced labour. Nevertheless, it was repeatedly emphasised to me that ‘working together’ (Kushandira pamwe/ukusebenza ndawonye) in groups on agricultural tasks is very widespread among rural women. The harsh conditions they have lived under, especially in recent years, have encouraged co-operation. Women work in groups for the company, for the extra help it gives them, and they often turn to one another for mutual support. Many informal co-operatives are begun by women. It is notable that, in the Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau rural survey, about half of women interviewed answered ‘yes’ to the question, ‘Are there any co-operatives in your area?’ What they were responding to was whether there was any ‘working together’ in their areas, as very few were in formal co-operatives and none of these were officially registered. Formal co-operatives of course, have the advantage over informal ones of state backing and aid; however, peasants may be more likely to be strongly involved in a form seen as democratic at a local level. The ‘solution’ most advantageous for women might be an integration of traditions of informal co-operation, into more formal structures — depending on the nature of the formal structures.

The problems of peasant agriculture and of resettlement in Zimbabwe have sometimes been construed as ones of unused peasant lands or of motivating women to participate in the economy. Neither contention corresponds to the situation in rural areas: any under-utilised land is white-owned, and women already participate economically on a massive scale. Rather the ‘problems’ are their continued lack of rights over land and over the means of production, and definitions of development which implicitly exclude women.

Why are women excluded in this manner? The main reasons are historical and ideological: women are excluded because they have always been and because they are ignored, made ‘invisible’. There may be another reason, however, which relates as well to women’s invisibility. I have referred before to the ‘feminisation’ of subsistence agriculture which occurred with the development of a migratory labour system. This has meant that the very great majority of people in Communal Areas are women and that they do most of the work. It is not always possible, even for those who do not wish to see, to overlook so many people, who contribute so much. At least, this may not be possible in a society where peasants hunger for land as they do in Zimbabwe. If subsistence agriculture has been feminised, then nearly all non-susistence agriculture, from cash-cropping to the largest plantations, remains under male control. Government resettlement policies may be an implicit means of defeminising subsistence agriculture and of restoring it to its ‘rightful’ owners.

This account has been rather pessimistic about the possibilities for women contained within the resettlement programme, both in terms of the ways in which
women's roles are visualised officially and of the ways these have so far been put into practice. It is important, nevertheless, not to lapse into Marxist-functionalist analyses, and not to see the outcomes of struggles as determined. Bozzoli's concept of 'domestic struggle' is useful in combating such functionalism. Just as class struggles are waged partly on a day-to-day basis, so are the struggles of women (and men) waged within households. The outcomes of such struggles, and their effects upon household forms and upon women's status, should not be taken as given.

So far in Zimbabwe, policies which interpret the world 'through the eyes of women' have not, or not yet, been formulated. Where women are included in policy issues, they have continued to be viewed as social and biological reproducers. Zimbabwean women's expectations are still high: it remains to be seen whether the women who helped win recognition of an independent state, will also be able to win recognition of their own needs.

Bibliographic Note

Government of Zimbabwe Publications:

General on Women and Household Economy:
Zimbabwe: Agrarian History (Pre-Independence):

Women in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa:

Agriculture and Resettlement, Post-Independence

Other Newsletters, Journals consulted:
Zimbabwe Information Group (ZIG); Zimbabwe Project Newsletter.

---

LIVELY, RELEVANT COURSES ON DEVELOPMENT

A new, interdisciplinary programme — MA (Development Studies) aims to combine the broadest survey of development, theory and strategies with a chance to pursue specialist options.

MA in Political Sociology for Development — for graduates in Politics or Sociology.

For further details about these courses and about Leeds' special scholarships write to: Lionel Cliffe, Politics Department, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK.
Women and Development in North Western Zambia: from Producer to Housewife

Kate Crehan

The area of Mukunashi in Zambia is one where capitalist production relations have been but minimally introduced, but where patterns of exchange have increasingly taken a monetary form. Crehan is concerned to investigate the implications of such economic changes as have occurred for the position and role of women. In common with similar situations elsewhere, she finds that new capitalist farming units when introduced are invariably run by men who in turn appropriate any surplus accruing. Women continue to be primarily responsible for supplying family food requirements, and the burden of ‘female’ tasks as regards both time and energy prevents them moving into cash generating activities, save in the case of beer brewing. The latter is an exception largely because the operations it involves are capable of being accommodated into women’s normal routine. But while women are able to earn some cash through their efforts, it is hardly sufficient to give them any economic independence.

One of the many radical changes associated with the development of capitalism in Europe is the transformation of the relationship of women to social production. In an economy based on the production of commodities, only labour which generates surplus-value is defined as productive, and a distinct sphere of ‘domestic’ labour is separated out from social production proper. This domestic labour is not performed as wage labour, nor does it result in the production of saleable commodities; consequently it is and, according to the logic of capitalist production, must be unpaid. Historically this unpaid domestic labour, which services both existing workers and the next generation of workers, has fallen to the lot of women. At the same time, in addition to their burden of domestic labour, women have been increasingly drawn into capitalist production as workers. This double exploitation is the particular characteristic of the position of women in capitalist economies. When economic life is not based on the production of goods specifically intended for exchange, but centres around production for the producer’s own use, there is not the same distinction between productive and unproductive labour. In this latter case all labour that results in the production of goods or services which fulfil a human want is seen as productive.

In this paper I have tried to draw out some of the implications for a group of Zambian hoe cultivators of being locked into an agricultural system not geared to production for the market and at the same time having a growing dependence on a range of industrially produced goods obtained only through some form of economic exchange with the wider Zambian economy. The paper focuses
particularly on the women concerned. The research was carried out between 1979 and 1981 during which time I lived for 18 months in one small Kaonde community in North Western Zambia. The main research method used was participant observation: Although the paper is in one sense specific and particular, the underlying processes described are similar to those found in many rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mukunashi, the area I studied, was a cluster of some 50 hamlets ranging in size from one to 22 households, scattered over the five-mile radius around a small primary school. To the south there was the vast Kafue National Park where settlement is forbidden, and 30 miles to the north there was the small town of Kasempa, the administrative centre of the Kasempa district of Zambia's North Western province. Since a new road linking Mukunashi to Kasempa was built in the early 1970s, most of the hamlets of Mukunashi have moved to sites near it. North Western Province as a whole is very sparsely populated with under five people to the square mile and outside the few small towns like Kasempa, is characterised by large expanses of unpeopled bush punctuated by little clusters of settlement focused on a clinic, a school, a road, or some combination of government services. One of the seven official languages of Zambia, Kaonde was the first language of some 111,600 Zambians — about 3 per cent of the total population — according to the 1969 census. The extent to which the Kaonde had a real corporate identity prior to colonisation is unclear but after 80 years of being treated as a ‘tribe’ by successive colonial and post-colonial governments, a sense of a distinct Kaonde identity undoubtedly exists. When I talk of ‘the Kaonde doing this’ or ‘the Kaonde believing that’, I am referring to that body of practices and ideas which the people I lived with considered as being the normal conceptual and practical baggage that goes along with ‘being Kaonde’. In the main, however, my data is specifically derived from the people of Mukunashi.

Kaonde agriculture was based on a chitimene form of cereal cultivation: a piece of bush was cleared during the dry season, the felled trees plus additional trees were piled onto the cleared patch and these were fired just prior to the onset of the rains. The ash fertilised patch was then sown with sorghum, maize or millet and might be used for anything up to 10 years before being abandoned and left to regenerate itself. When all the available sites within reasonable walking distance of the village had been used, the village moved to a new site. The Kaonde’s favoured staple was sorghum, but they also grew maize and some millet as well as a variety of vegetables. The area inhabited by the Kaonde is infested with tsetse fly and the only livestock they kept were chickens. This was still the basic pattern of village life at the time of my fieldwork, although underlying the apparent continuity many substantive changes are taking place.

Kaonde agriculture was geared to satisfying the consumption needs of the producers directly rather than through any system of exchange. This is not to say exchange did not take place. Even before the incorporation of the village economy within a wider capitalist based economy, the inherent uncertainty and fluctuating nature of Kaonde cultivation — vulnerability to natural vissisitudes being one of the characteristics of less developed forces of production — meant that sometimes households produced more than they needed and sometimes less. Similarly the different labour resources of different households, or of the same household over time, also affected the amount a household was able to produce. There have always been various exchange mechanisms which levelled out such
variation, but within a village much of the redistribution depended on manipulation of the complex web of reciprocal rights and obligations of kinship. There was a continual process involving delicate negotiation through which, albeit often in an implicit rather than an explicit way, material support was given in return for the acknowledgement of power and authority. Ultimately those in need could rely on the help of those with surplus because it was in this way that networks of power were built up, and these in turn were the means by which access to labour and the products of labour could be achieved. Although the ideological representations of this reciprocity remain, its material base is eroding. Two systems confront each other: one where the normal, expected way of satisfying most needs is by means of exchange, facilitated by the use of a universal equivalent, or money; and one where the unit of production normally expects to produce most of the use-values it needs.

Nowadays the people of Mukunashi have a whole range of needs which local village production cannot satisfy. Blankets, factory-made hoe blades, water containers, clothes and many other manufactured goods have become a regular part of village life. The demand for these goods is not frivolous; indigenous village production of tools and many other goods has for the most part succumbed to the onslaught of industrially produced goods, and these have come increasingly to represent the normal, expected way of satisfying many basic needs. But how is the cash to buy these necessary goods obtained? There is almost no wage labour in Mukunashi; apart from the five teachers at the primary school — all of whom come from urban based teacher training colleges — there is no one in regular wage employment. Occasionally the handful of more prosperous villagers may employ a little casual labour — often divorced or widowed women — but no individual supports themself exclusively through this type of work.

In the past, in common with so many of Zambia’s rural areas, many villagers, mostly men, engaged in migrant labour; but the classic cyclical migration between village and town or mine has now almost ceased. What has replaced it, however, is on the one hand a more permanent exodus of those, both men and women, who have succeeded in establishing themselves in town; and, on the other hand, a far more irregular movement between village and town by those who, although ill-equipped with relevant skills, move to town with the hope of establishing themselves in some way, but failing to do so, are forced to return to the village. On their return they find the same lack of economic opportunity which drove them from the village in the first place. After a time they may well decide to try their luck in town again, and again they are likely to be forced back to the village. Although the regular remittance of the migrant worker may be a thing of the past, the village economy as a whole is still linked to the wider economy through the sale of its labour power since those in town are still concerned to maintain their links with the village and there is an irregular flow of money and goods from villagers employed in the town to their relatives back home. Because of its informal and irregular nature, however, it is very difficult to quantify exactly how much comes into the village from this source. Not all villagers have relatives in town and even when they do, as far as I was able to discover, appeals to relatives in town are made more when there is a specific cash need, such as the expenses involved in equipping a child for secondary school, rather than when money is required for regular day-to-day needs, such as a new water container or hoe blade.
If villagers cannot sell their labour on a routine basis, do they produce commodities which can be sold? As yet there has been very little development of any cash crop production in Mukunashi. Production for the market means either villagers must grow extra crops for sale while continuing to produce what they need for their own consumption; or they must shift some of their labour to production for the market, using the money from the sale of produce to buy those things they are no longer producing. Quite apart from whether the terms of rural/urban trade are such as to enable rural producers to do this, it is necessary that the goods villagers want to buy are available, which is not the case in Mukunashi. Throughout rural Zambia at the time of my research there was a chronic shortage of almost all the goods villagers might want to buy, including basic foodstuffs, even in shops in towns like Kasempa; in the villages the situation was even worse. In fact, those villagers who have begun to grow some maize specifically for the market — so far maize is the only crop specifically produced for sale — are all men who are able to rely on their wives producing the grain they need for their own consumption. Any move into cash crop production is especially difficult for women, partly because of the particular nature of Kaonde productive relations.

Kaonde Agriculture: Women and Production
One of the fundamental principles of organisation in all kinds of production in Mukunashi, as in many similar peasant economies, is that the only real division of labour is one based on age and sex. There is almost no other specialisation of labour. Certain individuals may be acknowledged as having particular skills, one man may be renowned as a great hunter or a certain woman as a skilled potter, for instance, but all adults are expected to have mastered at least the rudiments of all the skills considered appropriate to their sex. The only partial exception concerns the skills of certain individuals, both male and female, in divination and healing, though these too are matters of which most people have a fair degree of basic knowledge. This was brought home to me when I arrived in Mukunashi. As soon as my presence became known, people began coming to me, often walking many miles, to ask for western drugs and general medical aid. Since I have no medical training and had only a tiny supply of medicines, it seemed irresponsible to set myself up as some kind of dispensary. So at the risk of seeming callous, I tried to make it clear that I was not a doctor and could not offer treatment. Although people learnt that I was not a source of drugs, gradually I realised that my careful explanations about not being a doctor and not having any kind of medical skills were totally meaningless to the villagers. From their point of view I was a European and, therefore, obviously knew all about Western medicine, just as they all knew the essentials of Kaonde medicine. Throughout my stay, particularly after beer drinks when the alcohol had eroded some of the layers of customary politeness, I was periodically accosted by unsteady figures demanding that I exercise my European curative skills, my protestations of medical ignorance being greeted with knowing smiles.

One of the basic concepts in the analysis of any production system is the ‘unit of production’ which refers to a particular collection of skills and labour that together produce a particular set of commodities under capitalist relations of production or a particular set of use-values in a non-commodity based economic system. The unit of production as regards cultivation within Mukunashi can be defined as that group of people who habitually work together on a set of fields, all
the various products of which make up a single joint consumption fund. The pooling of the joint products of the various inputs of labour is embodied most clearly in the single set of granaries which house the different grain harvests: sorghum, maize and millet. The basic elements that combine together to form the various different units of production in Mukunashi are women, men and children. Each of these categories has a specific, though in certain areas, overlapping set of tasks allocated to it.

In contrast to the notion of unit of production, that of the household is taken here to be an empirical category defined according to the villagers’ own usage. A household is a group of people who regularly eat together, and who see themselves, and are seen by others, as a unit with a certain political identity. There is no word in Kaonde which corresponds precisely to the term household; such a term would be redundant, since the name of the household head itself implicitly includes all dependent members. The term normally used to define the boundaries of households is *kuvijisha* which means to feed. An individual is described as either being fed by X (*bejisha*), or as feeding themselves (*mwine wijisha*), depending on whether or not they are considered to be part of X’s household, or to be an autonomous unit. Thus, whereas the unit of production is an analytical category defined purely in terms of the production process, the household is an empirical political entity that constitutes the basic unit of village political life.

The mechanism which in Mukunashi weaves all the different individuals into the various units of social life and relations of reciprocity and obligation is kinship. Kinship organises access to resources and distribution of the social product as well as furnishing the idiom of village politics. The Kaonde trace descent through the female line, and at the heart of the Kaonde concept of kinship is the notion of the shared blood link between mother and child. Despite the matrilineal idiom of Kaonde social relations, however, women are seen as subordinate to men, though linked through the female line, it is networks of men who dominate village political life.

The basic unit of production in cultivation is a woman plus any dependent children, not necessarily her own biological children, who live with her and for whose daily subsistence she is responsible. A clearly defined and specific division of labour between the sexes is seen as an unalterable fact of nature. Cultivation is primarily the responsibility of women. The initial clearing of the bush and the preparation of the fields is done by men. As far as the repetitive day-to-day work of cultivation and general subsistence is concerned, however, all the key tasks are either performed equally by men or women, as in the case of planting, bird scaring, weeding, or — and this applies particularly to the tasks of food processing, such as pounding and brewing beer — are thought of as essentially female tasks.

According to local conceptions, a man makes a field for a woman, most commonly his wife, but possibly another of his female relatives. The making of new fields for his wife, as and when this is necessary, is incumbent on every married man in Mukunashi. But equally, a man has an obligation to make fields for his female matrikin — the closer the link, the stronger the obligation — if one of these, as is quite frequently the case, does not have a husband to call on. But whereas a wife has the sanction of leaving her husband if he fails to provide her with fields — and wives very often do leave their husbands in Mukunashi — a man’s other female
kin have no real sanctions they can apply apart from invoking village disapproval of the defaulter.

In practice there may be a certain flexibility regarding the sexual division of labour, but the ideology is rigid. When I asked, for instance, why a particular man did not grow sorghum, I was told, 'he can't, he has no wife to harvest the sorghum'. This individual, it might be noted in passing, was regarded as a little odd — sufficiently so that in fact that no woman was prepared to marry him; but he was generally agreed to be a very industrious farmer.

The laborious task of cutting the ripe heads of sorghum from the stalks once these have been cut or trampled down is one of the tasks that is most rigidly defined as exclusively women's work. I never found any man with a wife who himself helped with this task. But there was one man, who lived alone with his only son and was something of an eccentric — in his case eccentric partly because he deliberately chose not to marry — who, with his son, grew and harvested sorghum. When I pointed out this exception to the rule, people just shrugged and indicated that this man's general eccentricity was explanation enough.

Once a field has been prepared it is seen as 'belonging' to its female owner rather than to the man who prepared it. Thus fields are normally referred to as Mrs X's field rather than Mr X's (her husband). Even more are the granaries in which the fields' produce is stored perceived as belonging to the female owner of the fields. Granaries are always referred to by their female owner's name and no one except the woman herself has the right to take grain from her granary, a right which is very strictly observed.

It is expected that children will work on the fields which provide the food they eat, but the help a woman receives from her children varies a lot. One particular problem nowadays is that there is often a conflict between the need for labour in the fields, if the family is to eat, and the desire that children should take advantage of the state education system. At the time of my fieldwork the success of a few educated villagers in the years immediately after independence had continued to sustain a belief in the value of education even though its present day benefits were in reality relatively small. But while encouraged to attend school, children were often drawn out when they reached their late teens, simply because the family could no longer do without their labour.

The help children provide in cultivation differs considerably according to their sex. Children of both sexes participate in the labour process almost as soon as they can walk. At first a child is asked to carry a sieve a few yards from the child's mother to the women pounding grain next to her. Gradually and informally, first as play and then in earnest, children of both sexes learn all the basic skills of cultivation and food processing.

Most of the tasks in which children participate, such as pounding, are seen as female tasks; and whereas small girls help their mothers more and more as they grow up, small boys become more and more unwilling to perform what they increasingly regard as 'women's work' and as demeaning to their growing sense of masculine dignity. From about the age of nine or ten boys begin to regard the female world of their mothers increasingly irksome, and are frequently to be found sneaking off to join other young lads in hunts for small rodents, or in search of wild fruits, or often simply in roaming about enjoying their freedom from adult supervision.
Men and women in Mukunashi tend to lead very separate lives. To a large extent the whole of village life is lived in two distinct and separate spheres: that of women and that of men. Women and men seldom work together; if a man is working in his wife’s fields, for instance, he will almost never work exactly where she is working, and normally he will be carrying out a different task to her. For example, he will be cutting or trampling down the ripe sorghum stalks, and she will be cutting off the heads of grain from stalks he cut some days earlier. The Kaonde believe that the only normal reason for individual men and women to spend time together is some sexual relationship. A man who spends a lot of time with his wife in other activities tends to be looked on as a bit odd.

Kaonde ideology stresses the interdependence of men and women; each sex is seen as having its own clearly defined role, the two roles neatly dovetailing to create a harmonious whole. In line with the general separateness of women’s and men’s lives, husbands and wives do not have a simple undifferentiated joint consumption fund. Rather, each partner produces a particular set of use-values, which are seen as ‘belonging’ to whoever has produced them, and to which others have claims. As well as the rights of a spouse, there are all the claims of other kin. In Mukunashi ownership means having the right to distribute rather than the right of exclusive enjoyment of consumption.

However, because of their early participation in their mothers’ production units, all men, although they may be shy of admitting it, can carry out most female tasks reasonably competently. Women, on the other hand, do not have the same opportunities to learn the skills needed for tasks such as hunting, building, the working of metal or the preparation of fields, which are considered to be the business of adult males only. Boys begin to learn these skills only when they have begun to disengage themselves from the female dominated world of childhood and are aspiring to be accepted as part of the adult male world. The main criterion for social recognition as an adult male is proficiency in male skills, and whereas in practice men may perform tasks defined as female, women do not perform male tasks. The only exception I ever came across was a very rickety and ill-built attempt at a granary by a very young woman. It might be objected that surely the techniques involved in some of the ‘male’ tasks are not so complex that women would find them impossible to master through trial and error. In practice, however, there are a number of reasons why this does not happen.

In the first place women already have a very heavy work load. In addition to the heavy demands of cultivation and the processing of its produce, they are also responsible for keeping the house and its yard clean and swept, washing clothes and general child-care. Two of the tasks which the women of Mukunashi themselves regard as the most onerous, and which take up a large part of their time, are fetching water and collecting firewood. In the whole of the Mukunashi area there are only three properly dug wells; apart from these water is available only from a number of small rivers and hand-dug waterholes. In the village where I lived, which was very close to one of the three wells, almost all the women spent a minimum of two hours a day fetching water. Similarly the collection of firewood normally demanded an expedition of several hours every few days. All these ‘domestic’ tasks are seen as women’s work although men may help a little with some of them. For example, men will sometimes collect large tree trunks for burning; and if a woman is quite clearly too busy, her husband may do his own washing. But in the main for a married man to undertake any of
these tasks would be shaming, not only for the man concerned, but also for his wife. Given the heavy demands on her time therefore, it would be difficult for a woman to undertake the long and very heavy job of preparing her own field,

which involves the felling of large numbers of mature trees with no more than an axe. Secondly, certain male tasks, particularly hunting and fishing, tend to involve extended trips into the bush of several days, or even weeks. Women's heavy responsibilities for the daily 'servicing' of the household make it difficult for them to make such excursions.

Overlaying these objective factors are ideological constraints which define the activities proper to each sex. The ideological norms do not work in a simple negative way, telling women what they cannot do, but more by setting up a series of obligations which men owe to their wives and matrikin. In part women fulfil their own obligations to their men in order to ensure that reciprocal obligations to them will be honoured. Women, moreover, tend to confine themselves to their own ideologically defined sphere of activity, because to do more and to usurp male tasks would not only increase their burden but would be tantamount to renouncing their rights to male labour. The burden of 'female' tasks is heavy enough as it is and certainly disproportionately more so than 'male' tasks, as evidenced by a common reproach to young girls by their mothers: 'what are you doing just sitting there, do you think you are a man?'
It is important to stress that my definition of the basic unit of production as a woman plus her dependent children is limited to cultivation. In other spheres the unit often differs; in the case of hunting and fishing for instance, men constitute the basic unit of production. But if, at least for cultivation, women and their children constitute the basic unit, where do men fit in? Are men simply to be tacked on in some spiteful feminist parody of the male bias of so much anthropological and sociological writing? No. The key point is that men gain access to the products of cultivation primarily through their relationships to women. Men have various claims on their female matrikin; young men who are not yet married but are, as the Kaonde say, no longer fed by their mothers, are often to be found trailing from one female relative to another in search of a meal. For while a woman's obligation to feed her male kin whenever they appear is unquestioned in principle, in practice people have evolved various ways of avoiding such obligations especially at the time of the year when food is scarce.

A man's most powerful claims to being fed are on his wife or wives. Polygyny is a desired goal for many men in Mukunashi, but nowadays few achieve it. Of the 225 male-headed households in Mukunashi, approximately eight had three wives. I say approximately because it is often difficult to be quite sure whether or not a marriage is extant since husbands and wives, particularly when there is more than one wife, do not always live together, and if one asks the two spouses separately whether or not they are married the answers do not always agree.

In broad terms the respective obligations of husbands and wives are acknowledged by everyone, both male and female, and one of the main obligations of a husband is that he should prepare fields for his wife. One of the criteria commonly cited to establish whether or not a man is old enough to marry, is in fact whether he is strong enough to undertake the strenuous task of clearing a piece of bush and preparing a field. In addition a husband may help his wife with hoeing, weeding and most of the other basic tasks of cultivation; but he is not obliged to do so, and his failure would not constitute grounds for divorce, whereas failure to provide a field would. A woman, on the other hand, has the obligation to provide her husband with food from the produce of her fields; failure to do so, or refusal to entertain his friends, would certainly be grounds for a divorce. When I discussed polygyny with both men and women, one of the statements that cropped up time and time again was, 'A man with more than one wife eats better than a man with one wife'.

Men can, and occasionally do, cultivate for themselves. Those men who do not have dependent women to work for them, however, are rarities, and are regarded by other villagers as decidedly odd. By contrast, women who do not have a husband and who cultivate for themselves and their children are numerous. Out of the 349 households living in Mukunashi at the time of my fieldwork, 124 were female headed; and while such women may be pitied for their poverty, their way of life was considered to be perfectly in accordance with the accepted norms of the sexual division of labour. Most of these women lived in the villages of their male matrikin, but there was one small and very poor settlement which was composed entirely of female headed households; the fact that a group of women, albeit no more than four households, could live independently of direct male control was seen as contravening basic Kaonde norms. Very soon after my arrival the youngsters in the village where I lived told me of the existence of this local curiosity, their attitude a mixture of ridicule and slight horror.
independence is one thing, political independence quite another. Any possibility of female independence of male control is profoundly subversive of the norms of Kaonde village life precisely because it threatens the basic authority relation through which men gain access to the products of cultivation.

Overlaying the interdependence of men and women as regards production, therefore, is a clear power relationship. Kaonde ideology is quite clear: wives are subordinate to their husbands and a man has authority over his female matrikin. As far as I could discover women had internalised this ideology and while quick to protest when they felt their legitimate rights were being denied, in general accepted their subordination to their husbands and male kin. When necessary, male hegemony is backed up by simple force. It is accepted by both men and women that a man has a right to beat his wife, and while women might complain that a particular man used excessive force or 'shamed' his wife by beating her in public, the basic right to the use of force is never questioned.

**Kaonde Agriculture: Responses to Change**

In the first part of this article I have concentrated on teasing out certain relationships inherent in Kaonde agriculture. I want now to look at some of the ways in which the wider capitalist economy has changed, and continues to change, the village economy. Villagers now need at least some cash income to buy the various manufactured goods they need; and money has also become necessary because so many of the small exchanges of village life — the obtaining of a little meat or fish, the making of a handle for a hoe blade or payment for a healing ceremony — now take the form of a cash sale rather than exchange of fish for grain, for instance, or a gift to be reciprocated at some later date. Where, particularly in the case of women villagers, does the necessary money come from; and what effect has the need for cash had on a system of cultivation not organised around the production of a marketable surplus?

As yet there are only the embryonic beginnings of production specifically for sale in Mukunashi. In 1979, 22 farmers in the area sold a total of 570 bags of maize to NAMBoard, the state marketing organisation. All this maize was grown on special fields, referred to locally as 'farms' rather than by the normal Kaonde word for fields (*majimi*), and was grown specifically for sale. As indicated by Table 1 the whole manner of cultivation on these 'farms' is quite different to that practised on the *majimi* on which the grain for the producers' own consumption is grown. Essentially, whereas the method of cultivation used on *majimi* derives from the accumulated knowledge and skills of the villagers themselves, the new methods used on the 'farms' have been taught to the villagers by agricultural extension officers or other 'experts'. The introduction of the new methods can be seen as a particular example of a more general process, common to modern farming everywhere, whereby individual farmers, regardless of whether or not they 'own' their farms, become more and more dependent on 'experts', marketing organisations and such like, so that increasingly it is the latter rather than the farmers themselves who decide what is grown, how it is marketed and to whom.

All the Mukunashi farmers who sold to NAMBoard were men. Their sales were of grain which was surplus to family consumption needs, the latter having been provided for by produce from fields worked by their wives. These men worked to varying degrees on their wives' fields, though the women did the major part of
the day-to-day cultivation there. Because women only very rarely worked on their husband’s ‘farms’, however, it was to men that the income from grain sold to NAMBoard accrued. One of the accepted obligations of a husband is to clothe his wife, and more generally individuals with any kind of surplus are expected to help any of their kin who are in want. Thus money received for grain sales is subject to the normal claims of wives and other kin. Money, however, can be discreetly tucked away in Kasempa Post Office in a way that other goods cannot and, partly for this reason, and partly because grain sales are relatively new and therefore not so encrusted with customary obligations, individuals find it easier to retain money obtained in this way for their own use.

Table 1
Patterns of Commodity and Non-Commodity Based Cultivation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Cultivation</th>
<th>Majimi Cultivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Measured rectangular plot</td>
<td>Irregular, unmeasured plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stumped</td>
<td>Not stumped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hybrid maize seed used, bought from NAMBoard</td>
<td>Local varieties of maize seed used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seed planted in rows</td>
<td>Seed broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fertiliser used, bought from NAMBoard</td>
<td>No fertiliser used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tractor used for ploughing, hired from NAMBoard; machine used to husk maize, hired from private contractor</td>
<td>Hoes and harvesting knives only tools used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bulk of cultivation carried out by male plot owner</td>
<td>Bulk of cultivation carried out by female plot owner plus dependent children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Some casual wage labour employed</td>
<td>No wage labour employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Grain stored in sacks bought from NAMBoard</td>
<td>Grain stored in locally built granaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Grain bought by NAMBoard (standard measure 25kg sack) at a nationally fixed price</td>
<td>Grain used by producer’s household, any surplus sold locally (standard measure, 4 gallon tin) at a ‘customary’ price fixed informally within Mukunashi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For a more detailed account of these differences, see Crehan, ‘Makunashi: An Exploration of Some Effects of the Penetration of Capital in North Western Zambia’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8 (1), October 1981.

One of the main reasons why women do not have ‘farms’ is that their work load is already so heavy; another reason is the firmly male orientated nature of all government measures to encourage production for the market. At the time of my fieldwork all of the handful of agricultural extension officers were men and, as far as they were concerned, the people they should be dealing with were the male household heads. If a woman had actually managed to establish herself as a cash crop producer they would not have refused to help her, but it was simply taken for granted that ‘progressive’ farmers would be men. The way in which concepts
of ‘progress’, ‘development’ and the like are pervaded by western ideological assumptions about the nuclear family with its male breadwinner, is illustrated by the following paragraph. I found this in one Mukunashi schoolgirl’s exercise book, carefully copied from the blackboard in a Social Studies lesson, and apparently intended to inculcate properly ‘progressive’ notions.

**Family Duties**
- a. In a family every member has duties to do which help the other members of the family.
- b. We must see that our duties are done well.

**Father’s Duties**
To work hard so that he can get enough money to pay for everything the family needs.
- b. Food.
- c. Land.
- d. Education (etc.)

**Mother’s Duties**
- a. To look after everyone in the family.
- b. To keep the house clean.
- c. To buy and cook food.
- d. To wash and mend clothes.

**Children’s Duties**
- a. To work hard at school.
- b. To be polite and honest.
- c. To help parents make life easier in the family.

As well as the relatively large-scale sales to NAMBoard, there is a considerable amount of small-scale selling of grain within Mukunashi. A little of the grain grown on ‘farms’ is sold locally, but most comes from those majimi which have produced a surplus. This is sold largely by women to women. The selling of grain for cash is something that developed during the colonial period and as with a number of other relatively recent developments, Kaonde ideology is not clear on the respective claims of husbands and wives to the money earned. On the one hand women control the distribution of the product of their fields, but on the other hand, as far as I was able to observe, once grain has been converted into cash, men, by virtue of the power relationship between husband and wife, often claim some if not all of the income. The grain that is traded in this way is nearly all bought for brewing beer.

Kaonde women have always brewed beer on the occasion of social events such as funerals, successful hunts, weddings or the ceremonies marking the successful conclusion of the harvest, and in the past there was a system of work parties whereby an individual would brew beer which would be distributed in return for help in cultivation or some other task. But the selling of beer is relatively new. The early male migrant workers, I was told, introduced the idea of brewing beer specifically for sale after seeing the bars of the Copperbelt. Nowadays most beer is brewed for sale and this has become a primary means by which women manage
to earn at least a little money.

Beer is bought primarily by men. The money to buy it comes into the village from various sources, one of the most important being the quite large earnings of a small group of local fishermen from the sale of dried fish. These fishermen belong to a group of non-Kaonde people, the Mbwela, who used to live in the Kafue National Park. They were forcibly resettled in Mukunashi, but are allowed to revisit their fishtraps in the Park where they catch large amounts of fish. The fish is dried, packed into large bundles and transported to the towns where it fetches high prices. Dried fish is in fact the most profitable commodity produced in Mukunashi and, at the time of my field work, some fishermen made as much as £400 in a year. The Mbwela have never cultivated extensively, specialising instead in hunting and fishing; in the past they obtained grain from their Kaonde neighbours in exchange for meat and fish. The transformation of these local fish and meat/grain exchanges into monetized form by virtue of sales of fish to the urban market is a concrete example of what the penetration of capital means at a micro level.

A second source of cash for purchase of beer is the income of local teachers, the five staff members at Mukunashi school constituting a far more important market for beer sales than their small number would suggest. Visiting relatives from town, or the money that is obtained from them from time to time, are also a means by which money trickles into the village economy. In the main the money entering the village comes initially to men; the sale of beer is one of the most important ways in which money is transferred from men to women.

Beer takes approximately a week to brew and involves many hours of labour during that time. Grain must be pounded, large amounts of water and firewood must be collected for the basic porridge, the special roots to assist fermentation must be gathered and the porridge must be cooked before finally being strained. Selling of the beer in turn often entails sitting around for many hours waiting for customers. The time employed in beer brewing varies, and the tasks are carried out along with a woman’s other daily tasks; but something like 28 hours spread over a period of six or seven days would be quite normal, even excluding the time spent selling the beer. The amount of beer brewed varies, but the maximum earnings a woman could hope to achieve in 1979/80 were about £18, but this was seldom achieved.

It might be objected that since women manage to find the time to brew beer, surely they must in fact have a certain amount of spare time which they could use to produce other more profitable commodities. In theory this is true, but in practice beer brewing fits in with the existing work pattern of women in a way that the production of other commodities does not. It requires the minimum of capital — the grain is often bought, but if necessary it can usually be paid for after the beer has been sold. It requires not special tools — if a women does not have the necessary large containers, these can easily be borrowed. In addition a woman can organise her brewing so that it fits in with slack times in cultivation, and the various stages in the brewing process can be fitted in between a woman’s normal daily tasks quite easily. Neither does brewing involve trips away from the village. A very important advantage, moreover, is that there is almost always a demand for beer, in stark contrast to the case of the small surpluses of the various crops — apart from grain — that women manage to produce in the course of their normal cultivation.
In contrast to brewing, the production of other commodities is often hedged with difficulties for women. The growing of maize for NAMBoard involves both a significant outlay of capital and availability of labour at precisely those times when a woman needs to work in her majimi. Women are effectively barred from the production of dried fish; the practical difficulties — inability to make long trips into the bush, given lack of time and the necessity to be available to carry out day-to-day chores — are reinforced by the ideological circumstances of fishing as a male activity.

Some women earn money by practising as diviners or midwives or by organising ceremonies to help those possessed by spirits. But whereas all women can brew beer for sale, and most do, only certain women are recognised as having these other kinds of skills.

As well as producing commodities for sale, the villagers of Mukunashi can also raise some cash by engaging in some sort of trading, but the amounts are minimal. No villager has any form of transport other than a bicycle or their own feet. Neither has any villager, male or female, access to the kind of assets or credit necessary for engaging in anything other than very small-scale trading. The limited amount of local cash also means that effective demand in the village economy is minimal. In consequence there are no full-time traders in Mukanashi. There are, however, a handful of villagers who regularly make trips to Kasempa, and sometimes even further, by bicycle and bus, bringing back a few packets of soap powder, some sugar, a few boxes of matches, a couple of plastic bowls, some bottles of cooking oil, or other items, all in very small quantities, which they resell locally. Although they put on quite a high mark-up, so that the price of such goods in the village is high, the volume of trade is so small that the traders’ profits are not large if the amount of effort entailed is taken into account.

Predictably, all the regular traders are men. Many of the women I talked to thought that trading was potentially the most profitable activity for a woman to engage in, but only for a woman in town. Some local women who had spent time in town had engaged in a certain amount of trading there; and a number of villagers had female relatives who were successful traders on the Copperbelt. But for women living in Mukunashi it was not an option. A woman who makes a trip to Kasempa to visit the hospital, or simply to visit relatives, will often bring back a few items to sell. But once again lack of available time and even less access than village men to the capital which even the most petty trading demands effectively bar women from this source of income.

Many village women have lived for quite long periods in town, either with a husband who had a job there, or in the household of some other relative established in town, and although they might have engaged in various economic activities there, generally these are seen as not being feasible in the village. For example, one woman told me that when she had lived in town some years earlier, she had made and sold children’s clothes. She still had her sewing machine in the village and when I asked her why she did not make clothes now, she explained that although the availability of materials was a problem, the main reason was that the daily tasks of cultivation, fetching water, collecting firewood, pounding and so on simply did not leave her any time. In contrast, and as yet one further indication of the differential level of work which men and women are obliged to do, the few male villagers who had sewing machines did manage to earn small amounts by doing small alterations and mending jobs.
Conclusion
In the first part of this paper I argued that Kaonde cultivation is based on a relationship between men and women whereby it is women who are the direct producers, men gaining access to the products of cultivation essentially through an extra-economic relationship of authority, primarily marriage, over women. In the second part of the paper I described some of the ways the villagers have established linkages with the wider economy through which a trickle of money is drawn into the village; I also indicated some of the ways this money is circulated round the village.

The incorporation of Mukunashi into the wider economy has created a complicated set of pressures which are fundamentally altering its non-commodity based economic structures. These pressures have stimulated the production of at least some commodities and are also beginning in various ways to transform relations within the village economy. In the process what were more complex, multi-stranded long-term relationships expressed in a kinship idiom are becoming those of the cash nexus. There is not likely to be a major development of cash crop production or wage labour in Mukunashi, but while the formal structure of the relations of production with their kinship idiom may remain, the substantive content of these relations is undergoing significant change.

The mechanisms by which the deficits and surpluses of individual households are evened out in the Kaonde system involves a complicated network of reciprocal obligations organised through a kinship idiom, whereby those with a surplus have a strong obligation — essentially avoidable only if the surpluses can be concealed — to make this surplus available to their kin. The doner also thus establishes an especially strong claim to any surpluses which may be accumulated later by those to whom he or she has given. Nowadays, however, it is possible for those who earn money through sales to NAMBoard, petty trading or whatever, to put this money into Kasempa Post Office where its exact amount can be kept secret and it is hidden from prying eyes. This means that it is easier to evade the claims of relatives. In addition money in the Post Office is in itself a form of insurance against future hardship so that the need to set up a network of ‘debtors’ who can be called on in the future is correspondingly less. Another new form of long-term insurance is investment in children’s education. Although nowadays even a secondary school education may not be sufficient to secure a place in the new Zambian economy, without at least some formal education a village child has even less chance of ‘making it’. Villagers are well aware that the old village life is becoming more and more precarious and it is not surprising, therefore, that they maintain a belief in the value of education however small the actual benefits may be.

Increasingly the model for the transfer of goods and services within Mukunashi is that of a cash transaction. Beer is brewed for sale on the model of the western bar, rather than as a part of a complex pattern of reciprocal obligation. Another small example of the kind of change taking place is provided by the way bicycles are lent. There are only a small number in Mukunashi and the general expectation — particularly on the part of those without bicycles — is that the owner of one should be prepared to lend out his bicycle when the need arises. Increasingly, however, bicycle owners try to extract payment in cash rather than just the previous more general unspecified obligation to reciprocate in some way at some time. In other words, the bicycle is not simply lent, it is hired out. The
fish trade provides yet another example of the way things are changing. In the past the Mbwela fisherman exchanged their fish for their Kaonde neighbours’ grain, and there were local norms governing how much fish was exchanged for how much grain. Nowadays the fishermen find it far more profitable to sell their fish in the urban areas and consequently Mukunashi experiences a shortage of fish.

The notion that labour is something that can be bought and sold is becoming increasingly central to the organisation of the local economy. For example, those who produce maize for NAMBoard commonly employ some casual labour. The term piecework has been incorporated into Kaonde as *mapiecework*. If someone has a particular task they want doing and if they can afford it, they may well pay someone to do the task as *mapiecework*. Capitalist relations of production, therefore, although fundamentally antagonistic to those of the Kaonde system, are nevertheless seeping in both at the level of peoples’ consciousness — in determining, for example what constitutes the ‘proper’ form for an economic transaction — and, at the level of economic transactions themselves, as the sphere of exchange, in particular, is increasingly organised on a cash basis.

Given these substantive changes, how has the condition of women been affected? In the main it is men who are able to take advantage of the few opportunities offered by the wider economy beyond the village. Women have tended to remain locked into the older non-commodity based structures unable to move into commodity production, unable to find wage employment except on a casual basis, and yet needing at least some cash income. The only real source of income for village women is village men. Women can sell beer to men in a transaction which derives from the model of the market economy; they also obtain cash, and the manufactured goods it buys, through direct claims on their husbands and other male kin. One of the obligations of Kaonde husbands has always been to provide their wives with clothes. Before the importation of cotton cloth it was men who made the barkcloth from which clothes were made — Men are also obliged to build wives’ houses, make tools for them and so on. These kind of obligations are increasingly being transformed in modern village life from claims on a man’s labour into claims to whatever money he may have acquired.

The process is accompanied in turn by a transformation at the level of ideology as the older Kaonde notions of male domination begin to creep towards the capitalist norm of the male dominated nuclear household with its male breadwinner who, in the words of the social science text quoted earlier, should ‘work hard so that he can get enough money to pay for everything the family needs’. In the meantime village women continue to perform all their customary tasks. But as cash becomes even more central to economic relations within the village, there begins to develop the same distinction as in a capitalist system between labour which produces commodities and that which just produces use-values. Thus there is already in Mukunashi the germ of that process which transforms the latter kind of labour into that sad devalued creature of capitalist social relations, domestic labour, which is just as arduous as any other kind, but which is denied the dignity and the economic reward of the only work such a system defines as productive: that which results in the production of commodities.
Women's Groups and Women's Subordination: An Analysis of Policies Towards Rural Women in Kenya

Rayah Feldman

Rural women in Kenya are burdened by heavy workloads, often being responsible not just for attending to domestic needs — including provision of food for their families — but having as well to work as casual labourers. They are further hampered by lack of access to income obtained from the sale of cash crops grown by the household, even though they often contribute labour to the cultivation of such crops. In these and other ways they suffer the impact of gender relations which place them firmly in a position of economic subordination. The Kenyan government has acknowledged that women are ‘disadvantaged’ and has made a formal commitment to alleviate their situation. Economic and political crises, however, have tended to displace attention from the needs of oppressed groups in Kenya, including women. But it would be questionable in any case that the prevailing perception of a solution based on ‘integrating women into development’ would bring about significant change. Rayah Feldman examines a set of organisations on which government policy towards women has been focused: women's groups co-ordinated by the Kenyan Women's Bureau. Her analysis suggests that while assisting some women to generate extra income, their impact is sparse, uneven and often of dubious value. Seldom indeed do their projects, even when successful in terms of profitability, approach the requirements for fundamentally altering the condition of subordination of rural women.

Introduction
Policies of the Kenyan government towards women have to be set in the context of its overall development objectives. Kenya was, in 1977, one of the first member states of the ILO to take up a ‘basic needs’ approach to development, with poverty alleviation as the main theme of its Fourth Plan, and with women acquiring apparently definite, though not very clearly specified, importance as a target group for the Plan's policies. This Plan gave particular weight to the creation of income-earning opportunities. Employment creation was one of three means by which this objective was to be realised. The ILO Report ‘Employment, Incomes and Equality’ had seen women heads of rural households as a ‘problem group’ requiring ‘specific action to improve (their) conditions as part of any employment strategy. The Plan indicated the Kenyan government’s commitment to eliminate male/female differentials in earnings and also ensure diversification of women’s participation in the modern sector. It also advocated the redefinition of the roles of men and women, though it did not specify how this was to be done.
The government had also been committed since 1966 to a ‘Women’s Group Programme’, which was finally introduced in 1971, though government sponsored programmes for women can be traced back to the colonial period. A Women’s Bureau to co-ordinate the Programme was set up in 1975, International Women’s Year, as a division of the Department of Social Services.

This Women’s Bureau has now become both the effective focus for policies towards women and a major means of acquiring international funds for aid specifically directed at women. Such funds are welcomed by the government and, are relatively easy to come by, given the current Western enthusiasm for women’s ‘development projects’ as a new object of Third World Charity. They also inevitably increase the importance of the Women’s Bureau as the agency for acquiring them.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the work of the Women’s Bureau is that it serves to legitimise certain kinds of ‘special treatment’ for women. The effect of some currents of feminism, as well as of a ‘basic needs’ approach to government planning, has made it acceptable to single out women as an especially ‘disadvantaged’ group. In this view women have been left out or left behind in the development process and require special programmes, initiated, controlled and co-ordinated by government agencies. In Kenya, with the emphasis on employment creation, special ways of generating income in women’s groups are seen both as remedial, given women’s disadvantaged position, and generally compatible with this particular objective in the Plan.

For historical reasons, stemming partly from the colonial establishment of women’s groups in some parts of Kenya and partly from traditions of women’s work parties and rotating credit associations created in response to their common position in the agricultural division of labour, women’s groups have come to be seen as the chief, if not only, means of improving the position of rural women in Kenya. A Women’s Bureau survey of 1978 stated that there were then over 8,000 women’s groups in the country with a membership of over 300,000 women. This represented just over 11 per cent of all African women above the age of 20. The Women’s Bureau justified its focus on women’s groups both on the grounds of strategy and because of limited resources.

The objectives of women’s groups are primarily two-fold: (a) to achieve social welfare functions and (b) to implement commercial projects. Most groups are actually multi-purpose, generally combining mutual assistance in the form of a kind of rotating credit association with cultural handicraft, social, educational or economic (income-generating) activities.

In examining their impact on the position of rural women, a central question to raise is whether women’s groups as presently conceived and constituted can be a solution to women’s problems of poverty, and employment. To do this, it is first necessary to explore more closely the assumptions of ‘involving’ or ‘integrating’ women in development which underlie the practice of the Women’s Bureau and secondly to place these assumptions firmly within the context of current economic and political conditions in Kenya.

The Myth of Integrating Women in Development

Both in and outside Kenya the problems facing rural women have often been posed in terms of ‘integrating women in development’. Their disadvantaged
position, it is argued, is a consequence of women's own backwardness.

Alternative explanations have, however, begun to be developed. Whitehead, for example, insists that 'any study of women and development, of the effects of education, lower fertility rates, changing production, etc. on women’s position or on their status, cannot start from the viewpoint that the problem is women, but rather men and women, and more specifically, the socially constituted relations between them' (author’s emphasis). In order to characterise these relations in Kenya, I follow the usage developed by some feminists, of speaking of the subordination of women to men. In situations where women are unequal to, oppressed by, or disadvantaged with respect to men, general relations of dominance and subordination are implied. These nevertheless vary geographically, culturally, historically and in relation to overall economic structures, notably today of capitalism.

To understand the position of women in a country like Kenya we need to explore the links between women’s class position as peasants or wage workers (or both) and the ways in which this has affected or been affected by their subordination as a gender. In Kenya, far from needing to be integrated in the development process, women already play an integral part in the economy. They are engaged in agricultural labour on their own homesteads and in wage labour on small farms, as well as in factories and on large farms and plantations. They also play a prominent part in the 'informal sector', especially in beer brewing and prostitution. Whether as farmers, casual workers, or employees in the 'formal' or 'informal' sectors, women have a clearly defined and subordinate role. This subordinate role is sustained both by legislation and widely held beliefs.

Although Kenyan women are juridically equal to men before the law, their legal status is in many respects characterised by assumptions of dependence on men, which are expressed not only in marriage and divorce laws, but also in contract law, property law, and even some aspects of criminal law. Similar assumptions are made in the legislation on taxation and hospital insurance. Despite apparent equality before the law, then, this assumption of dependence effectively discriminates against women, and there is no law in Kenya which protects against sex discrimination as such.

The de facto access of women to economic resources, especially land, is determined by such assumptions of dependence on men. In addition, similar assumptions of dependence and concomitant inferiority restrict women’s potential access to economic resources. Thus, for example, officials often speak of women as being weak and unfit for certain kinds of employment, such as construction work or engineering, despite the manifest fact that every day in the rural areas women carried out the most arduous and heavy agricultural and domestic work. This apparent paradox can be explained by the fact that men consider women to be their subordinates — the denial of an existing wife any say in her husband’s further marriage plans, or the continued statutory right of men to beat their wives, testify to this. In her subordinate role as wife, no work is too hard for a woman; other kinds of work carried out by women in their own right could challenge this subordinate status. Thus the prevailing structure of gender relations and the ideology legitimating it continue to prevent women from moving into existing male preserves of employment which, not coincidentally, also command relatively higher wages than those into which women have been permitted. In this situation, the expansion of economic opportunities for women
in Kenya is clearly not merely a question of small administrative changes, but represents a challenge to very long standing patterns of male dominance and female subordination. At the same time, while the problems which women face with respect to their position in society are partly specific to them as women, a substantial part of their economic problems is also common to all Kenyan workers and peasants, in that the overall conditions of the Kenyan economy affects men as well as women.

**Economic Crisis and Adjustment of Stated Government Priorities**

Since 1978 the Kenyan government has found itself pressured by a balance of payments deficit and an incapacity to sustain the projected rate of growth of the economy of over 7 per cent, which by mid-1980 was revised downwards to 3 per cent. Kenya has long been characterized by sharp inequalities of income, considerable landhunger, very high population growth, a high rate of labour migration and participation in the 'informal sector' owing to the absence of adequate industrial wage employment. By 1980 there was in addition a food shortage and an economic crisis so serious that a standby loan was negotiated with the IMF with the usual emphasis on growth, exports and 'demand management'. This economic crisis was set against a background of unrest and repression against peasants, workers, politicians and intellectuals. This culminated in the 1982 attempted coup, which was met with the arrest of over 60 students and further detentions of dissidents.

In view of this economic and political climate in Kenya, it is important to question both the priorities for development which the government claims and whether women are in practice likely to constitute a special group to be singled out for preferential treatment. Despite its claims to place priority on poverty alleviation, it is typically the poorest who, as also the least powerful, face the brunt of the effects of food shortages, unemployment and wage restrictions. The immediate economic crisis, then, has led to the displacement of stated development objectives of satisfying basic needs, poverty alleviation and employment creation. Evidence of recent years suggests that even quite explicit demands of oppressed groups are being met either not at all by the government or only under extreme duress. On the contrary, those voicing grievances and articulating demands have frequently been met with severe and brutal repression. Insofar as rural women share the same problems of crop marketing, low incomes and few employment opportunities as rural men, it is hard to see why or how conditions could be improved for them alone. Nor indeed if prevailing economic conditions are being challenged by female as well as by male peasants, are the women likely to receive a more sympathetic response than the men.

In this situation what is the role of the Women's Bureau? Its *raison d'être* is its commitment to increase women's involvement in development. Programmes that are designed under it are intended to ensure that ultimately women's socio-economic activities will be more productive and their individual, family and community welfare responsibilities less burdensome and more rewarding. But as I have argued, the problem for women, and in particular rural women, is not one of lack of involvement in development; it is rather a combination of a development emphasis which both confined them to poverty and their general subordination as women. Challenges by small peasants to the government's overall policies have not succeeded, nor is the Women's Bureau as a 'non-
political department within the civil service likely to participate in any such challenges.

In the remainder of the paper I will examine in more detail the distinctive problems which rural women encounter as agricultural producers and domestic workers. I will then show how the Women's Bureau, unable or unwilling to affect the overall situation of women as over half the rural poor, fails in addition to confront the actual daily experience of most rural women by virtue of its very concentration on women's groups. As a result, despite their apparently widespread membership, women's groups do not provide a means for challenging the subordination of women in Kenya.

Rural Women in Kenya
In 1974/5 women constituted just over 50 per cent of the rural population in Kenya, which itself represented about 87 per cent of the total population. The female small farm population was estimated to be about 5.3 million.

Rural women frequently continue to carry out the same kinds of tasks as women in pre-colonial Kenya; but the economic and social functions of these tasks have often changed as the rural economy has become commercialised. Domestic labour has become a supportive activity to those men who earn incomes either by growing cash crops or as wage workers.

Food growing activities performed by women cease to be the central pivot of the household's economy, although the responsibility of feeding the family remains the woman's. These activities have become ancillary or subordinate to cash earning activities whether on or off the farm, and cash incomes tend to be at the disposal of husbands, whatever labour has been contributed by wives. The farm and domestic duties of women, moreover, have tended to restrict their access to the few economic opportunities which do exist, so that whether as commercial farmers or wage employees men have been better able to grasp such opportunities while women continue to service them by food growing, domestic labour and child care.

Any attempt to justify the subordination of women implied by their restriction to domestic tasks in terms of traditional forms of social organisation, especially marriage, has become increasingly irrelevant in the changing demographic and social structure of Kenyan society. Approximately one quarter of all Kenyan rural households are single-female headed. In these the husband is either dead or absent for long periods, and women assume responsibility for satisfying both the domestic and income needs of the entire household. Yet while women single-handedly run 24 per cent of households, only 5 per cent of women in Kenya own land in their own name. In addition, the pressures which confine them to domestic and subsistence activities deprive such women of any alternative means of livelihood except under the most insecure and exploitative conditions. In those areas of rural wage employment, such as plantation agriculture, where there are concentrations of female labour, women are predominantly employed on a casual basis, at far lower rates than men.

Women's educational attainment is significantly lower than that of men at every level and age despite recent increases in female enrolment at primary school level. Given both land shortage and absence of employment opportunities in the rural areas, such uneducated, young, unmarried women are finding themselves
at an even greater disadvantage in getting incomes than men of the same age.

Kenya's high birth rate (54.6 per thousand per year) has a further effect on women's incomes, since whether married or single, the burden of childcare falls to women. In the past young girls were always available to help mothers with the care of small children, but more take-up of primary school education by girls, as well as changes in family organisation, have reduced the availability of such help. The problem of childcare directly affects the capacity of women to take up wage employment as even the largest employers do not provide childcare for the children of their employees. But in any case wage employment remains scarce in rural Kenya for both men and women and there is little evidence that this will change in the foreseeable future. For the sake of brevity I will therefore concentrate on the situation of women in the small farm sector and ignore the problems of both those women in regular employment and 'unemployed'.

Despite the fact, documented in many surveys and studies, that women perform a critical role in Kenya's agricultural economy, their position remains highly disadvantaged; women do not own land, cannot raise security for loans, often fail to have access to cash incomes from agriculture and are relatively untouched by agricultural training programmes. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that their work load is actually increasing. In spite of this, I was told by a Senior Planning Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture that there were no specific programmes in agriculture aimed at improving the economic position of women. At a Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held in Rome in 1978, deliberate steps were taken to include women in the Kenyan delegation, and resolutions were supported in favour of assisting women. However, the Planning Officer's view was that problems for the rural poor were the same whether they were men or women and indeed that to focus on women would be (wrongly) to isolate them. Yet there are specific problems which face women in agriculture which are exacerbated by such a policy of gender-blindness.

**Women's Work Loads in Agriculture**

Women's work in agriculture is part of their total domestic responsibility. The effects of male labour migration, increased primary school attendance of children, increased numbers of live births, declining infant mortality, growing population density, concomitant land shortage and the adoption of new agricultural practices have all tended to increase the load of work that women must bear. Where cash cropping has replaced cultivation of food crops and holdings are very small, households are obliged to purchase food. The Integrated Rural Survey 1974-75 showed that for households with two hectares or less (comprising 59 per cent of the total number of small farm households) over 50 per cent of the total value of food consumption came from purchased items.

In a case study of Kikuyu families, Kershaw observed that it was in households with less than two acres that men most commonly migrated to towns to seek work. Women were left to find casual work locally to supplement family incomes. According to Kershaw, farm decision making had actually shifted from men to women in such poor families, yet despite this the economic position of women was far more insecure than that of men. Monsted also found that poorer women bore an increased burden of work since richer farmers were able to hire labour to either supplement or replace family labour. Indeed the poorer women were likely to be the unrecorded source of such labour. In Nyeri I was told that smallholders,
unlike large farms and plantations, tended to employ more women than men, but on a casual basis.

In view of the large work-load of poor rural women two points may be raised. Firstly, it would be desirable for women to be able to reduce the work-load and have more time for themselves and for other activities, including income-earning, activities. So long as their work-load increases because they service male access to income-earning activities, women are bound to remain subordinate to men. Secondly, since most women depend on men for the cash element in household income, and since cash is such a large proportion of household income needs, it is important that women be ensured access to that cash income in recognition of their labour contribution.

Access to Household Incomes

Two important aspects of women's access to household incomes are the marketing of the main household cash crop and the marketing of other produce seen primarily as 'women's crops'. As the main cash crop is normally seen as the man's, even if, as it almost always the case, women play a significant part in its cultivation, it is also regarded as normal for the man to be responsible for the sale of such a crop. Numerous interviews with officials confirmed this. For instance the Embu District Commissioner said that

the housewife is the key person in the management of the home. In coffee growing the husband is probably the working person, but if not, he is the overseer. The wife does all the work. She is the 'working class' who has to be left at home. The financing of the crop was done by the husband. If the husband is at home he will be the general manager, while the lady is the manager. If the husband is working elsewhere the wife will go and sell the crops, but when the husband is fully employed on the farm, it will be he who goes to sell the crops. Normally household budgeting is carried out in full consultation with the wife, and only in a few cases — social failures — does the husband not give the wife money.

In practice, contrary to the Embu DC's view, many women still suffer difficulties in gaining access to household income.

The survey of child nutrition in rural Kenya has shown that in certain sugar growing areas there is evidence of significant childhood malnutrition in households where sugar and tea are cultivated as cash crops. Whilst the Nutrition Survey's conclusions are tentative in attributing this to displacement of subsistence crops, their findings warrant further research into the distribution of household incomes on farms where increasing acreages are being put over to cash crops, and in particular into the capacity of women to get access to income from those crops in order to meet household needs, including the need of feeding the family. Certainly, the consumption of sugar cane in Western Province as a substitute for other foods suggests that neither in terms of crop payments, nor in terms of decisions about land use, are women, as those responsible for the family's food, equal to men.

Similar conclusions emerge from a study of the Mwea irrigated rice scheme which indicated that despite higher household earnings from agriculture, women, as the ones responsible for the provision of food, found that they had to work harder, both on the new cash crop of rice, and also on subsistence plots which were too small for the family's needs. Their husbands gave them some of the rice harvest in return for their labour, but the women had to sell this in order to purchase sufficient food for the household. With the 'food' plot now residual
within the family farm, the women lost most of their former economic autonomy.

Whilst the household's main cash crops rarely give women independent incomes, subsidiary crops are commonly designated 'women's crops' and women often gain an income from their sale in local markets. In some areas, notably in Central Province, local markets are well established, and women have an important trading function. Elsewhere, however, such opportunities are still lacking. Historically, emphasis in Kenyan agriculture has been on major cash crops, and horticultural crops grown primarily for home consumption or for local markets have remained residual; crop loans and 'formal' facilities for their marketing are generally undeveloped.

Meanwhile, for many women, the brewing of beer remains the sole means of achieving an independent income. A Presidential decree of 1979 stipulating that private beer brewing was to be discontinued, while unevenly enforced, has led to a good deal of harassment of women in both urban and rural areas. The measure was directed against drunkenness, but its effect is more likely to render the (female) brewer a criminal or to direct the profits from drink to wealthier bar owners and Kenya Breweries than to reduce the incidence of drinking among men. The measure is therefore a discriminatory one against poor women, whose economic options in the rural areas, are, in the short-run, extremely limited.

Land

Land hunger and even landlessness have been constant problems for the Kenyan peasantry since the colonial period, though their actual extent is difficult to establish. What concerns us here is less the problems of land shortage per se, which obviously form a crucial backdrop to the economic position of Kenyan peasants, than the extent and effects of differential rights to land of men and women and the ways in which land shortage may differentially affect them.

Both before and since the colonial period, men's and women's rights to agricultural land have been fundamentally different. Okoth-Ogendo has distinguished between rights of allocation (not of ownership or alienation) in traditional tenure systems and rights of access. The former rights were normally vested in particular men, whereas women, by virtue of their relationship with those men — mainly as daughters and wives, though also as mothers — had rights of access and use. The effects of land adjudication and land registration measures have been to concentrate land in the hands of men on the basis of private ownership, thus no longer guaranteeing automatic rights of access to women members of a former landholding group such as a lineage.

Whilst women are now theoretically in a position to buy land which is offered for sale, the price of land, women's lack of independent income in agriculture and their more restricted employment opportunities outside, make its purchase even less of an option for most women than it is for men. Brokensha and Njeru, refuting the views put forward by Okoth-Ogendo and Pala, contend that land adjudication has increased the power of women in Mbere Division, Embu District; but they offer no evidence whatsoever to support this view. It would seem that the gains to most women from individual land registration have been more hypothetical than real. There is also a particular problem of access to land for unmarried women, exacerbated by increasing divorce rates as well as decline in the frequency of marriage in areas of great land shortage where young men cannot themselves get land for household use upon marriage. This is likely to
become an increasing problem for women who also, in general, are unable to inherit land.

Okoth-Ogendo and Pala both refer to the consequences of land sales stimulated by poverty. These are, of course, normally effected by men since women are rarely registered landholders. These writers refer to the potential landlessness of women because other pressures of peasant society may encourage the traditional access rights of the female relatives of registered owners to be honoured. However, Pala suggests that ‘this trend ... is likely to be jeopardised by the fact that land is not readily available and, in addition, employment opportunities for these families are very limited’. It is evident that women’s security of tenure is crucially linked with the sufficiency of land available to a household or family. The most vulnerable women are those in households where land may be sold for cash and who have no alternative access to it. For women, the lack of independent access to and control over land must increase their dependence on men.

Extension and Training

Leaving aside the question of how much farmer training affects productivity, the official assumption that it does, and men’s and women’s differential access to it, reflect the ways in which men and women are officially viewed and treated as farm decision makers. Most training of farmers is directed towards men rather than towards women. Interviews with District Agricultural Officers confirmed that the basic assumption of extension was to communicate with male farmers unless they were absent, in which case general extension workers would talk to the women. In Murang’a District I was told that the man was normally approached for any communication ‘because women are shy’. In Kisii one of the District Agricultural Officers observed that women were unable to come on training courses because they were too busy running the farms. Single household heads were particularly unlikely to be able to use training facilities because of their domestic responsibilities.

It was not just a question of women’s availability for courses at Farmers’ Training Centres, but the willingness of husbands, in whose hands the decision often rested to let their wives go. Some courses, anyway, were effectively confined to men since they dealt with loans for which only men were eligible.

Staudt carried out a study of 212 small-scale farm households in Kakamega District in Western Kenya. Forty per cent of her sample were female ‘farm managers’, corresponding to a figure of 36 per cent single-female headed households for Kakamega as a whole. She found that although about one-third of trainees at the local FTCs were reported to be women, they were generally found in Home Economics courses, which they, though not the men, were required to attend. Such courses included not more than 30 per cent general agricultural training. With respect both to visits by extension officers and to attendance at FTCs, female managed farms fared significantly less well than jointly managed ones. Staudt argues that women were given relatively less assistance by extension services both because of prejudicial attitudes towards them and because of the customary attitude that men talk to men and women talk to women. Whether or not prejudicial attitudes are widespread, the proportion of men and women extension staff can effectively guarantee that, apart from the understaffing of the extension service as a whole, women are proportionately highly under-represented, especially in view of the predominant role of women in
agriculture. The Chief Training Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture said that the ratio of men to women extension officers was 3:1. In Murang'a District, out of 162 technical assistants in agriculture, only 15 were women (9 per cent of the total). Of students taking diplomas in agriculture at Egerton College between 1977 and 1979 no more than 22 per cent in any year were women trainees. Similar proportions were obtained in other colleges.

Even more important, though, than the actual numbers of women extension officers, is what they are trained in, and the tasks which they are expected to carry out. Between 1977 and 1979 as many as 40 per cent of women at Egerton College were trained only in Home Economics and Agriculture. The lower level certificate courses which train extension officers involve a choice between general agriculture and home economics or general agriculture and agricultural engineering and soil conservation. In theory, men and women can do either combination; in practice they are divided along sex lines.

The effect of the concentration of female agricultural extension officers on home economics is not just that they do not know much about other technical aspects of agriculture, but that their very expertise in that subject takes them away from normal extension activity devoted to agriculture and leads them to concentrate on welfare and nutrition problems. While important, these tend to de-emphasise the potential of individual women farmers to acquire knowledge and skills to improve their farming methods. In this way the entire extension and training programme directed towards women is marginalised, and all other agricultural programmes are then free to forget about the problems of women. If you ask about women, you are told that their needs are being covered by home economics.

**Women's Groups and Women's Subordination**

I have argued so far that in addition to the overall economic and political problems faced by Kenyan peasants, the existing division of labour within the household as well as patterns and assumptions of dependence by women on men effectively place women in a position of economic subordination. It is thus their particular relationship to men in respect of problems of development or underdevelopment which determines the relatively 'disadvantaged' position which government policies towards women claim to seek to rectify.

Within the terms of the analysis in this paper, a positive evaluation of such policies would therefore need to demonstrate that they were providing or encouraging transformation of the subordinate relationship of women to men as a necessary condition of improving women's position in society. This would mean, among other things, facilitating women's access to land on equal terms with men and breaking down the structure of gender relations which gives men — but seldom women — access to unpaid labour. It would also mean encouraging and enabling women, whether married or not, to be independent members of co-operative societies and to raise crop loans, as well as training women in further skills as farmers rather than as cooks.

This analysis and these kinds of criteria are not shared by the Kenyan government or the Women's Bureau who see lack of integration in the development process as the central problem facing women and special programmes of training and income generation as the means to solve this.

Specifically women's *groups* are seen as a means to supplement *individual*
incomes. It is accordingly largely in terms of this criterion that I shall initially examine them. There is, unfortunately, little useful documentation available about women's groups. I have been unable to see a copy of the Women's Group Survey prepared by its research department, though some of the preliminary returns from that survey are published in a report on Women's Groups by Mette Monsted. I have also been unable to get any systematic information whatsoever about government contributions to women's groups. This review of the impact of women's groups on rural women in Kenya relies therefore on three sources:

1. Visits paid to women's groups in almost all districts visited during the ILO mission to Kenya;
2. Interviews with officials and private individuals about the work and impact of women's groups;
3. Published material on women's groups.

According to the Women's Group Survey, 11.1 per cent of women over 20 in Kenya (excluding Nairobi) were members of women's groups in 1978. As can be calculated from the figures in Table 1, 73 per cent came from the Central and Eastern Provinces, which together accounted for 35.3 per cent of the population of women over 20. This means that the remaining 64.7 per cent of the female population of Kenya accounted for only 27 per cent of the women in women's groups.

This geographical concentration of women's groups has several important implications, given the priority which the Women's Bureau has given to women's groups, and the concentration of financial assistance which goes to them as a means of improving the condition of Kenyan women as a whole.

Firstly, the emphasis on women's groups by the Women's Bureau means that most women in Kenya are actually ignored in terms of the women's programme even from the point of view of governmental concern, let alone any kind of financial aid. Women in Central and Eastern provinces are likely to get five times as much attention per head from the Women's Bureau as women in the remaining provinces simply because of their greater membership of women's groups.

Secondly, according to the head of the Women's Bureau, financial assistance of the order of K.shs 5,000-10,000 has gone to 500 or 600 women's groups. By the Women's Bureau's own estimate this accounts for only 6 to 7 per cent of all groups. Assuming that this aid is equally distributed across the country and that it is equally distributed between groups with approximately average numbers of members, then it is still the case that about one-third of women (in Central and Eastern Provinces) are receiving about three-quarters of the available aid.

Thirdly, there is evidence of further bias in that women's groups tend to be composed disproportionately of the 'better off' women. Monsted, for instance, claims that 'it is ... evident even from the present meagre information, that the poorest families, the landless labourers and the single women are under-represented in the women's groups'. My own observations confirmed this. Both because of the demand on time which they made and the membership contributions it was at least very likely that poorer women were excluded from membership.

Fourthly, young women tended to be excluded from the women's groups.
### Table 1
Women in Women’s Groups in Kenya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population of Women over 20 ('000s)</th>
<th>Number of Women’s Groups</th>
<th>Average Membership size</th>
<th>Estimated Membership</th>
<th>Membership per 1,000 Women over 20 in Kenya 1977</th>
<th>Total Number of Women in Groups as a Proportion of Women over 20 in Kenya (per cent)</th>
<th>Total Number of Women in the Area as a Proportion of Women over 20 in Kenya (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>487.6</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>134,100</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast</td>
<td>283.6</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18,150</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>550.8</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>105,200</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>385.7</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyanza</td>
<td>664.9</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24,600</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rift Valley</td>
<td>515.9</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29,925</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Kenya</td>
<td>2,940.3</td>
<td>8,225</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>326,375</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic statistics for Kenya indicate that over one-third of women have already married and had their first child by the age of 20. The women's groups, however, attract predominantly older women. Neither the Women's Bureau survey, nor an earlier report on the Women's Group Programme in the Special Rural Development Programme in 1975 referred to the age of women in the women's groups. But Monsted's study, by implication, was concerned with women over 20 since she counted members of women's groups as a proportion of women over that age. Women in Kakuyuni Women's Group in Machakos District, however, told me that there was a need for a young women's group; young girls there married at about 15 years but though they would like help to make money and get education, they were unlikely to join a group where older women predominated.

By its policy of concentrating its attention on existing women's groups, the Women's Bureau therefore excludes nearly 90 per cent of rural women in Kenya from its attentions and is also biased in the assistance it gives in favour of women in certain regions above a certain age and relatively better off.

Despite this criticism, it remains necessary to examine what women's groups have actually achieved for those who have been members and participated in their activities. Such achievements can be judged either directly by seeing how far they provide income-generating opportunities for women or indirectly by judging the degree to which they have improved the welfare of women through enabling them to increase their access to incomes, or increasing their status and political strength, the better to pursue these objectives. It needs to be borne in mind that although the Women's Bureau emphasises income-generating activities of women's groups, they involve 'mutual-assistance' and other 'socio-
cultural' activities as well as 'economic' ones. Therefore any comments on their purely income-generating function have to take into account these other purposes which may be supported or hampered by income-generating activities.

In the course of my study I visited over 15 women's groups in 10 districts. All were engaged in income-generating activities of which most were non-agricultural. A large proportion of them had received some kind of assistance, either through the Women's Bureau or directly through Church or other international voluntary agencies. These groups cannot, therefore, be considered typical of all women's groups, since only 6-7 per cent of women's groups overall have received financial assistance of any kind. Conclusions drawn from the visits to these groups have to be treated with caution. On the other hand, it seems safe to assume that the groups visited will have been among the more, rather than the less, commercially successful and that therefore doubts about their viability can be extended, at least by hypothesis, to a much wider range of women's groups.

Agricultural Projects of Women's Groups

The types of agricultural projects which women's groups undertook were predominantly poultry schemes, grade cattle, bee-keeping, fish marketing (a fishing co-operative in Kisumu which, though called a women's group, had a majority of men members who also occupied key positions on the committee), pyrethrum, maize and flower cultivation, pig-keeping and, on the Perkera Irrigation Scheme, the cultivation of pepper.

It was extremely difficult in the time available to find out in any but the most superficial way how far these activities actually generated incomes. An overall problem facing the groups was marketing and, as far as poultry was concerned, the high cost of feed-stuffs for the birds. The kinds of poultry projects which were being introduced in women's groups depend on imported poultry and purchased feeds, as well as on sophisticated management systems, which are difficult to sustain on a collective basis when women are living on separate homesteads. They are also economical at a far larger scale than the groups are typically able to handle.

A number of the groups used agricultural projects as investments for other enterprises. Masimba Women's Group in Kisii District had rented three *shambas* (land for cultivation), two of pyrethrum, and one of maize. They employed contract labour, mainly using female casual labour, to work on the *shambas*, and sold the pyrethrum to the local co-operative society of which the group had become a member. The proceeds of this agricultural enterprise were divided between the members of the group and used for roofing or the purchase of grade cattle. This group functioned primarily as a 'savings' body, except that it has undertaken investments in agriculture to accumulate the savings rather than simply depending on monthly contributions. They were, however, hoping to branch out into non-agricultural enterprise and open a shop or a flour mill, for which they were hoping to get financial assistance from the government.

As well as marketing problems faced by women's groups attempting to engage in agriculture were lack of skills, equipment and capital for the kinds of projects which they were undertaking. In this respect, Masimba group in Kisii was unusual in that its projects of growing maize and pyrethrum did not involve any skills which the women lacked. On the other hand, the members of the group did not take much part in labour on those *shambas*. By contrast, Ligusa Women's
group in Kisumu district, which was a bee-keeping group, complained of the problem of lack of harvesting equipment for the honey, and lack of training in bee-keeping. They had also bought some dairy cattle which later died, and had cultivated large quantities of tomatoes and bananas for which there was no market, due largely to the appalling communications between the women's place of residence and other areas.

A striking feature of women's agricultural projects was firstly, their lack of integration into overall local agricultural development plans, which means that there was no obvious basis for supposing that 'innovative' type projects were actually the most profitable within the area. Secondly, it was clear that the projects were often seen merely as ancillary 'enterprises' in which members of the groups did not need to be involved except in assisting to put up finance. Insofar as they lacked finance they tried very hard to get government assistance in the form of loans or grants. In virtually every case seen, the agricultural projects were considered subordinate to further plans of building shops, and other local businesses. Insofar as the women's groups were successful in getting support for their projects, they also risked being taken over by men who wished to assume financial control.

There are some conclusions which can be drawn about the role of agricultural projects within the women's group programme on the basis of those visited. Perhaps most important, the projects did not seem to have more than a marginal potential for affecting the lives of the women who were involved in setting them up. More needs to be known, however, of how far broader agricultural programmes and training are integrated with the types of projects which women's groups undertake.

Where agricultural projects are used as investments, they may generate small incomes for their members. Projects which are the least ambitious, involving small-scale cultivation of known crops, are in fact probably the best investments and also have the advantage that they can be carried out without government assistance. Typical local cash crops can be grown on land acquired by the women's groups using labour from outside the groups with the certainty, based on local experience, that it's possible to get an income from such crops.

Insofar as women are short of money for domestic needs, such activities in groups can work as a savings association, like the well-known 'Mabati' groups, and can be a useful financial and welfare aid to women, especially if the groups involve some kinds of other mutual support. But if projects such as these are to be used for savings and mutual support purposes, all women need to have access to them, and membership contributions must not exclude poor women. Where land is expensive and women poor, or where a group does not have access to land loaned by one of its members, there is some doubt as to whether such agricultural projects could get off the ground at all. It is also doubtful whether the wages and casual conditions of employment of the hired workers used, who are commonly poorer women from outside the groups, or men, are part of the welfare considerations of the groups, or of funding agencies.

More ‘ambitious’ agricultural projects such as exotic poultry keeping, bee-keeping, grade cattle, etc., are often activities which are not normally undertaken by local farmers because of local technical and/or economic conditions. They are also often risky, capital intensive, and dependent for their
viability on being undertaken on a large scale and with expert management. Such projects, in fact, like some non-agricultural ones, are likely to lead to increased dependence by women's groups on both the government, and on the goodwill of members' husbands. It would seem probable that if a new activity could generate large returns with minimal new knowledge, management skills, capital and time, then all local farmers would already be undertaking it. And if a new activity demanding these kinds of inputs is initiated by women who cannot provide them themselves, then they are going to be forced to surrender their autonomy to government agencies.

Non-agricultural Projects
Most of the income-generating projects of the groups visited were not agricultural. They ranged from a bus co-operative in Taita-Taveta District, to consumer shops, handicraft production, a residential house for rental, small-scale sewing and basket work, a milling machine and a meeting hall and bakery. Unlike agricultural projects, such ventures virtually all involved some novel form of small-scale enterprise, requiring capital and some untried markets. Generally, the more certain the market, the more capital was required. Cases in point included residential housing and milling machines; on the other hand, the easier-to-enter activities such as handicraft production generally required less capital but were dependent on very uncertain markets.

There is no adequate or systematic accounting data on any of these groups' activities. It was, however, striking that not a single non-agricultural project visited appeared to be income-generating, without writing off the grants that had been made. Indeed, some were in dire financial straits despite having been given large grants or loans. In Kakemega, Kaimosi Women's Group, described by the District Community Development Officer as one of 'the most successful women's groups', had been given a large loan from Partnership for Productivity to buy a clay making machine. The group had a temporary market for their pots and other handicrafts guaranteed by the National Christian Council for Kenya (NCCK), and they had had two German volunteers who had helped them with both technical aspects of pottery and marketing. With this help they had managed to replay their loan, but the markets had dried up, and the volunteers had gone, leaving them with insufficient expertise. This forced them to reduce production because they had no profits, and therefore no money for materials. They had also experienced a decline in membership of the group because it showed no return for a lot of effort. These kinds of projects, which were essentially small enterprises of the 'informal' sector type, both of a productive or non-productive nature, seem for the most part to have been developed with a remarkable disregard for considerations such as market conditions, skilled personnel, or capital depreciation, as well as for wage levels and employment conditions of workers, or whether these latter were women.

Whilst there may be scope within rural Kenya for an expansion of local industry, women's groups are not the only ones involved in the harsh competition to corner a small section of a limited market. The Mraru Bus co-operative found that despite private and public loans, the instalment payments and running cost of their bus often yielded them no profit. In addition, since they started their enterprise they have suffered from an increase in the number of 'matatus' competing with the bus, which are both cheaper and quicker. Following the initial success of their first bus, they decided to build a shop. They obtained a loan of
10,000 K.shs, but still needed the means to fill their shop with wares, and in fact there were several other local shops competing with them for a very limited market. In Murang’a District two women’s groups in a single village have built shops around the same market square where there is already another shop in existence. One of them received a grant of over 16,000 K.shs from the Norwegian government. Another group in Murang’a was building a rooming house to let. They had already received 10,000 K.shs in aid, and had made considerable investments. However, their half-built house required another 35,000 K.shs investment to finish. Because each woman wanted her own room to let, the project had to consist of 18 rooms, as there had been 18 group members. As a result, the project as a whole was beyond their means.

Such observations are clearly somewhat impressionistic, but they can also be repeated for virtually every so-called income generating project that was visited in the course of the ILO study. It must be remembered that many of these groups were ‘star’ projects which had something to show for themselves, or which had had financial assistance.

Conclusion
In the absence of detailed figures it seems, nevertheless, that funded projects are eating up the assistance they are receiving without generating an income for anyone. Or if they are, it is a short term income to groups of better endowed women, as with the rooming house builders in Murang’a, or to women who have better connections than others. The Kaimosi cottage industry project, for instance, had earlier had connections with a local mission and the NCCK; the Chango Women’s Group in Vihiga had a chairperson who lived in Nairobi and had also established marketing connections with the NCCK. If the Women’s Bureau is concerned with raising money from foreign donors for distribution to women without any greater accountability, then a more just and more widely distributed benefit could be provided by means of regular social security payments to all women in Kenya.

But if the Women’s Bureau is seriously interested in women gaining greater access to income generating opportunities, it needs to question whether handicrafts projects without markets, consumer shops without wares to sell, buildings constructed with government grants to set women up as landlords for cheap housing, exotic poultry projects, and other uncompetitive or unproductive enterprises — all affecting only a tiny proportion of Kenya’s women — are really the solution. It needs also to examine whether the heavy financial commitment to individual women participating in such undertakings, and the consequent exclusion of women who cannot afford contributions, does not actually serve to destroy the important mutual welfare contribution which women’s groups have the potential to make.

It was noticeable of the income generating projects that, apart from ‘traditional’ women’s activity in handicrafts or traditional agriculture and excluding some instruction in new skills, such as sewing and embroidery, most work was carried out by men. If women’s groups have only a minimal impact in generating incomes, their contribution to women’s employment creation is equally negligible. For women’s groups to have an economic impact at all, they need to be the focus of breaking down existing conceptions and practice of the sexual division of labour. They would also have to concentrate on the areas where
women’s needs are greatest in their daily lives and where there are no existing means of satisfying them. This could mean women themselves engaging in the construction of feeder roads, domestic water tanks, and buildings for creches and nurseries, as well as learning to drive and to do cost accounting. Women’s groups are often defended in Kenya on the ground that their existence gives women more power. But women can only have more power if their activities challenge existing power relations. Women’s acquiescence in their lack of many skills and their dependence on government for support confirms their lack of power. As long as women’s groups fail to assist their members obtaining training in marketable skills such as plumbing and carpentry, and as long as women’s groups are being established by those who are hoping for government handouts, while being unable independently to secure loans, or for the sale of their crops where there are no established markets, rural women are neither increasing their power nor, in consequence, transforming the social and economic conditions in which they live.

Bibliographic Note


On other aspects of rural Kenya see D. Brokensha and E. Njeru, Some Consequences of Land Adjudication in Mbere Division, Embu, Working Paper No.320, Nairobi, Institute

Author’s note: This article is based on part of the material collected by the author while acting as a consultant to the ILO in 1980, to report on problems of rural women’s employment in Kenya. The Kenyan government has refused permission to publish that report.

Class, Race and Gender: Domestic Workers in South Africa
Deborah Gaitskell, Judy Kimble, Moira Macnachnie and Elaine Unterhalter

Domestic service has long been a major sector of the South African labour market, for black women particularly, but the government has only lately begun to consider stipulating minimum employment conditions in this sphere. Union formation among domestic workers on any significant scale is also only a recent phenomenon. This article takes a preliminary look at domestic service from various angles — conceptual, historical and contemporary. A new slant is provided on the existing theoretical discussion of domestic labour, for domestic workers are here clearly distinguished from housewives. The peculiar way in which race, class and gender have all shaped the character of domestic service in South Africa is stressed at the outset, and the way various races and both sexes moved into and sometimes out of domestic service is illustrated. The authors conclude that the current trend away from the long-established pattern of live-in servants may well aid political mobilisation of formerly isolated domestic workers.

Introduction
In South Africa it is often said that African women are oppressed in three ways: oppressed as blacks, oppressed as women, and oppressed as workers. Domestic service comprises one of the major sources of wage employment for African women in South Africa, and it is an important nexus of this triple oppression. The meaning of triple oppression is complex. It does not simply represent a convergence or 'coalescence' of three distinct types of oppression, seen as variables which can be analysed in isolation from each other and then superimposed. Sexual subordination when one is racially subordinate is one thing. Sexual subordination when one is a wage labourer in a racist society is quite another.

Western feminists have argued that the consideration of gender transforms the analysis of class, that the substance of class oppression is gender specific. South African socialists have shown that an analysis of class transforms the analysis of race. In the same way, we would argue, the substance of gender subordination varies according to racial and class specifics. Once one begins to consider the dynamic relations between gender, race and class, it is necessary to link these categories in such a way as to avoid static analysis of variables or the temptation to collapse them into each other. Our starting point of analysis of South African society was to pose questions about gender which made us think again about the dynamics of race and class. In turn we found that any serious analysis of class
and race tends to dissolve the unity of gender.

Once we recognise the cultural and political complexity of 'gender', it becomes necessary to examine the limits of some of the concepts which have been developed by Western feminists for a materialist analysis of the ideology of femininity in the Western world. As one Western black feminist has recently argued, if, for example, material dependence of women within the nuclear family is seen as central to the construction of the ideology of femininity, this poses problems:

How then can we account for situations in which black women may be heads of households, or where, because of an economic system which structures high black male unemployment, they are not financially dependent upon a black man? This condition exists in both colonial and metropolitan situations.

Although it could be argued that this ideology of dependence also bears little relation to the reality of many white women’s experience, clearly the introduction of a racial or colonial factor here requires a more complex analysis. As Carby goes on to suggest,

Ideologies of black female domesticity and motherhood have been constructed, through their employment... as domestics and surrogate mothers to white families rather than in relation to their own families...

Carby’s comments clearly raise broader questions about whether there can be said to be any unity to the concept of gender, and about the political ‘boundaries of sisterhood’ which cannot be gone into here. However we would suggest that these kinds of questions are very important in the context of South Africa. An understanding of the historical and material conditions of black women under the racial capitalism of apartheid shows that ‘triple oppression’ is a very complex condition.

Our task is to think through some of these problems in the case of black female domestic service. The situation of workers in domestic service in South Africa, when analysed in strictly economic terms (see following section), resembles that of unproductive workers elsewhere. In particular, it can be seen to have a lot in common with many kinds of service work generally considered to be domestic (cleaning work especially) or performed by wage labourers for household-based employers. Domestic servants, as members of a service sector of the working class, tend to exhibit similar characteristics all over the world: isolation, dependence, invisibility, low level of union organisation. Some of the reasons for this pattern are recognised: the particular character of the labour, usually labour-intensive and unskilled; and the social relations between the employer and worker. Domestic service thus has a class character.

At the same time, domestic service tends to have a gender character: it is mostly done by women. This is so despite the fact that it has been, and continues to be, done in part by men. There are three reasons why domestic service is seen as women’s work par excellence. First, the actual tasks associated with it — cooking, cleaning, washing, child-care — have been almost universally assumed to be ‘naturally’ part of woman’s sphere. Second, it is assumed that such tasks are normally performed in the household. Third, the ‘personal service’ aspect of such labour resonates with the ideology of woman as wife. It is thus striking that even when men do perform such work, any apparent contradiction is generally absorbed. The most common examples of men performing this work occur in the
colonial context, or in a racially divided society where subordinate groups perform the task, a point taken up in the next paragraph. In the case of South Africa, we can note that in the early colonial period, from the point of view of African societies, any form of wage labour was considered to be a male occupation, domestic service included. Moreover, as suggested by Van Onselen in his study of ‘houseboys’ on the Reef at the turn of the century, male domestic workers may have resorted to counteracting activities outside the workplace to reaffirm their own sense of gender (and social) identity. Changing from ‘saucepan’ by day to amalaita (‘teddy-boy’) by night, they would compensate for their loss of masculinity by suitably aggressive and independent behaviour. In contrast, when African women perform domestic work, it resonates completely with the kind of work they ‘ought’ to be doing as women, something reinforced by both mission and traditional African education of young girls. Supervision of domestic servants by white ‘madams’ also fulfils the expectation that domestic work is essentially part of the woman’s sphere. Furthermore, it is clear that the actual tasks associated with domestic service are especially ‘female’ when performed in the home. A male chef employed in a restaurant, or a male laundry worker, both of whom work outside the home, and for a wage, are not necessarily considered to be doing ‘women’s work’.

Third, as has already become clear, domestic service, especially in colonial societies, has a racial character. Almost everywhere in the world it is performed by ‘socially inferior’ groups: immigrants, blacks and ethnic minorities. In South Africa, from the turn of the century, household-based domestic service has been above all a black institution, whether performed by men or women. In white colonial society, the deepening of racial division made it more acceptable to have black men performing the role of servants than white women, although calculations of prestige, wages and the sexual dimension implicit in the employment of black manservants could produce counter-tendencies. Under colonialism generally, servile status is the exclusive preserve of the colonised, and where masters are white, servants are black. In South Africa, in general, for the last 50 years, domestic service of the kind we are discussing was performed by black women for white households. The racist and colonial character of the relationship is very strong. Although some black women do employ domestic servants themselves, and although the relationship may manifest a servile or class character, it does not resonate with the overall structures of racial domination in South African society. Rather, it may contribute to an awareness of class differentiation within the black population.

In sum, then, the social relations of domestic service employment in a colonial context are deeply implicated with class, gender and racial structures: they are also shot through with contradictions. Domestic service is often the point of entry to wage employment by newcomers to the job market; but others remain in the job all their lives. The labour itself is generally looked upon in society as inferior, servile, low in status, badly paid; those who can escape up or out, do so where possible. Conversely, it is the weakest and most socially subordinate strata who end up in the job: women, immigrants, ethnic minorities. In South Africa, the people who ‘end up’ in the job are African women.

In a recent major contribution to the analysis of domestic service in South Africa, Cock has pointed to the importance of the South African white household as a site of reproduction of sexist, race and class ideology. Drawing from Marxism and
feminism, she argues that the household is ‘a crucial and largely hidden site of inequality in the South African social formation’. She also emphasises the need to analyse the subordination of African women. Into the equation she puts the kaleidoscopic history of domestic service; the political economy of gender relations between white men and white women; and the history of racial subordination and capitalism in South Africa.

One important factor missing from this equation is what might be called the political economy of gender relations between black men and black women. In our view it is necessary to go back again, to go deeper into the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, taking a consciousness of gender categories. The economic and political struggles of the African peoples in the last 90 years have carried within them struggles over the position of women and relations between the sexes. Thus, for example, when considering how black women ‘ended up’ filling the ‘unskilled’ job of domestic service, it is vital to consider, for example, the differential way in which African men and women were proletarianised, and the way in which this process was structured by the sexual division of labour and gender relations in African society.

From this broader perspective, the analysis of domestic service touches on three much broader issues: job segregation, the social relations of household domestic work, and the gender subordination of black women. To begin with the question of job segregation: how and why do certain jobs come to be seen as particular to certain racial, sexual and social groups in any given society? It is now generally acknowledged that the allocation of jobs, all of which have particular skill connotations, within the working class is a process subject to continuous struggle. This struggle goes on both between the working class and capital, and within the working class as a whole. Increasingly, this kind of struggle is being shown to have taken place over sexual division, as much as over racial division. In South Africa historians have demonstrated that the racial division of labour within industry (where white came to mean skilled) was determined largely by the relative strengths and weaknesses of the different sections of the working class in relation to capital and the ‘white’ state. Comparable attention has not been paid to the way in which women of all races moved in and out of specific job categories. But an examination of the dynamics of this struggle could go some way towards explaining how black women ‘ended up’ in domestic service.

At the most general level, we can point to two familiar dimensions of the process of primitive accumulation, which not only affected the racial division of labour in South African capitalism, but also the sexual division of labour. These are: the separation of the direct labourers from the means of production, and the creation of a new productive enterprise apart from the household, the capitalist firm (sometimes rather loosely called the separation of the home from the workplace). To take the first point: the way in which African societies were only partially expropriated from their land at the turn of the century is central to the explanation of the emergence of a migrant workforce in the industry which provided the motor of capital accumulation in South Africa — mining. Equally importantly, the existing sexual division of labour in African societies, reinforced by missions and colonial legal codes, ensured that this was a male migrant force. The way African women were drawn into wage labour, both on white farms and in towns, was thus clearly linked to the subsequent development of the migrant labour system. Similarly, the differential way in which black and white men and
women were displaced off the land as a result of the capitalisation of settler agriculture could help to explain the way in which they were drawn into the labour markets of the subcontinent. This process has yet to be studied in South African history. On the second point, we could note that the different ways in which African and settler households, both rural and urban, were transformed as sites of production under the impact of capitalist penetration has dramatically affected the position of women within the different racial groups. Very little work has been done on the various patterns which emerged here. The very words ‘domestic’ and ‘service’ are used very loosely, and loaded with untested assumptions about the past. For example, it is often assumed that forms of labour organisation which emerged within both settler and African households under capitalism had already been in existence in pre-capitalist societies. This may not be so.

The second major issue which is raised could be called the social relations of domestic service. Domestic work is a labour process which is continuously changing as the social relations of apartheid capitalism change. The demand for servants among whites, for example, is determined by the degree of urbanisation, the structure of the white household, and the racist assumption that one or more black servants formed an essential component of the ‘standard of living’ of whites of all classes. The degree of drudgery, or labour intensity, of domestic service is related to levels of black unemployment and wages; the development of a consumer durables manufacturing industry; and possibly the squeeze on white household incomes under inflation. If there is an increase in part-time as opposed to full-time domestic service, what is the significance of this for both workers and employers? Such questions must be related to broader trends in the South African economy.

The third question concerns the African women themselves. Given that this is one of the bottom rungs of employment, what are the other forces pushing African women to the bottom of the heap? What is the actual content of gender subordination of black women? Working in white households is one of many sites of oppression for black women. Ossified legal structures purportedly based on traditional law; ‘education for domesticity’; influx laws tied into backward juro-political structures in the ‘Bantustans’; racist and sexist controls on movement and residence, and on property rights — some of these structures and processes have a direct bearing on the oppressive and exploitative experience of working as a domestic servant.

In this paper we do not try to discuss all these questions. Raising them merely serves to expand the arena for debate, and to point to the overlaps and connections between gender, race and class. It also points to the need to situate domestic service within a broader discussion of the South African social formation. Domestic service is a deeply oppressive feature in the lives of thousands of African women, for many of whom it is the only possibility of wage labour. These women have much in common with domestic servants elsewhere in the world, in both the neo-colonial and advanced capitalist societies. But the context of apartheid capitalism gives domestic service a special dimension which we have tried to confront in this paper. The rest of the paper is divided into three parts. The first is a theoretical discussion which distinguishes between domestic service and housework in terms of value theory. The second provides an historical sketch of some of the changing patterns of domestic service in South
Africa. The third section looks at the current situation in the Republic, where the growing militancy of black workers and developments in unionisation have to be critically evaluated in the light of broader struggles.

Conceptualising Domestic Service
This section draws on some of the debate surrounding the nature of domestic labour under capitalism in order to provide a framework within which we can conceptualise domestic service. It is not, however, our intention to review the debate itself, but only to draw out from certain of its assumptions and analyses useful lines of argument for a discussion of domestic service.

The domestic labour debate represented an attempt by Marxist feminists in America and Europe to provide a materialistic analysis of the subordinate position of women under capitalism. The theoretical questions posed within the debate centred on whether or not the value concepts developed by Marx in *Capital* are applicable for an analysis of the domestic labour performed by women within the household. The debate marked an attempt to break with the orthodox assumption that the concepts developed by Marx are applicable only for an analysis of social production, and set out to situate domestic labour as part of the overall social division of labour under capitalism. The critical axis around which the debate revolved was the discussion of whether or not domestic labour could be conceptualised as productive or unproductive labour, or whether it was indeed private labour and therefore outside the scope of a Marxist economic analysis of capital accumulation. In this sense the debate can best be understood as a conceptual argument between Marxists over the scope and applicability of particular concepts.

The major divergence between our concern and that of the domestic labour debate is that we are interested in the position of domestic workers rather than in the position of housewives. The unit of analysis adopted by contributors to the domestic labour debate was that of the family, seen as consisting fundamentally of the dependent housewife and the 'breadwinner' husband. In drawing a distinction between the position of the domestic worker and the housewife we will retain the definition of the housewife as the woman who is not only responsible for the performance of the domestic labour within the home, but who also performs this labour under familial or kin relations without direct remuneration. The domestic worker on the other hand is defined primarily as a 'worker', as a person who performs the domestic labour in this case in exchange for a wage. Therefore, while it is possible that historically the actual household tasks performed by the domestic worker and the housewife may be the same or of a similar kind — childcare, cooking, cleaning, washing — the position and status of the housewife and the domestic worker are entirely different.

The position adopted within this paper with respect to the domestic labour debate is that domestic labour itself is essentially concrete privatised labour which is concerned with the production of use values for direct consumption within the household. While the performance of some form of domestic labour is necessary to ensure the daily and generational reproduction of individuals within the household, it is labour that is performed irrespective of whether or not those individuals sell their labour power on the market. Briefly, domestic labour is not exchanged directly against variable capital, it is not productive of commodities, it is not allocated according to the law of value and it does not constitute a source of
surplus value for the capitalist: it is not productive in the Marxist sense. Fee's quotation from Marx makes this clear:

Productive labour, in its meaning for capitalist production, is wage labour which, exchanged against the variable part of capital (that part of capital that is spent on wages), reproduces not only this part of capital (or the value of its own labour power), but in addition produces surplus value for the capitalist . . .

Only wage labour is productive which produces capital. It is clear from this that domestic labour, because it is not productively consumed within the capitalist production process, cannot be conceptualised as productive labour under capitalism irrespective of whether it is performed by the housewife or by the domestic worker. Further, since domestic labour does not produce surplus value, neither the domestic servant nor the housewife can be conceptualised, in the narrow economic sense, as exploited by capital in their performance of it.

The essential difference between the position of the housewife and that of the domestic worker lies in the fact that the domestic worker provides a service that is directly paid for. The domestic worker works in exchange for a wage from the employer, is subject to control and supervision, and may be fired as well as hired. The housewife is not so governed. The social relations under which the domestic labour is performed are different, and accord to the housewife and the domestic worker a different status.

The domestic worker can be conceptualised as an unproductive worker, as a worker who performs 'labour which is not exchanged with capital, but directly with revenue, that is wages or profits'. The distinction between productive and unproductive labour under capitalism is important; for, while capitalists purchase productive labour, it is possible for wage labourers as well as for capitalists to purchase unproductive labour. As Gough explains:

The capitalistic qua capitalist purchases labour power with which to create surplus value. The capitalist, or worker for that matter, qua consumer purchases labour services for the direct use value they provide. The former is productive, the latter unproductive.

Unlike the domestic labour performed by the domestic worker, the labour of the housewife within the household is not covered by either of the concepts of productive or unproductive labour, since it is neither exchanged directly against capital nor against revenue. The housewife is often in a relationship of personal dependence on other household members for her means of subsistence.

Domestic workers may be employed in the households of capitalists, of the middle classes and of the working classes. Their employment is however structurally dependent on the degree to which these different households can afford them. This dependency can be understood in terms of the customary level of wages paid to domestic workers, in terms of the fluctuating income of the household of the employer and whether they have sufficient income to pay for the services of a domestic worker, or possess the relative power to force down the level of wages paid. It is this element that highlights the relative powerlessness and vulnerability of domestic workers in comparison with other sectors of the labour force. The ability of workers to maintain an adequate wage has been linked historically to their organisational and union power when negotiating with employers, and backed by strike action. Because they work individually in isolated household units, often living at their place of work, domestic workers have found it difficult to organise.
These characteristics of domestic workers are in evidence in capitalist societies all over the world. From this perspective, the extremely low wages and lack of political organisation amongst domestic workers represent more of an extreme case of a general phenomenon than a special case of its own. Until recently, the racial character of capitalism (apartheid) in South Africa, premised on a specific system of exploitation designed to reproduce a supply of cheap black labour to all employers, has created conditions of (national) oppression under which all black wage levels are depressed and all possibilities for union organisation have been extremely restricted. These conditions have made black female domestic service, which is at the bottom of the ladder, extremely vulnerable. But, we would suggest, their structural situation is not exclusive to South Africa.

Within the domestic labour debate there is an assumed identity between women and domestic labour; this is coupled to the assumption that it is housewives who perform the domestic labour within the household. However, introducing domestic service into the discussion of domestic labour under capitalism which we have attempted to do, challenges both of these premises. In the South African social formation the identity of women as housewives and domestic labourers cannot be sustained: both historically and in contemporary South Africa many women have been relatively freed from certain wifely obligations to perform domestic labour by the employment of domestic workers. Neither is it true that domestic labour has always been performed by women domestic workers: both black men and black, as well as white, women have been employed as domestic workers. The following section on the history of domestic workers in South Africa will attempt to illustrate the changing nature of the racial and sexual composition of the 'domestic workforce' in South Africa.

**Historical Overview**

Domestic service and agriculture were the most important sectors of the black labour market in South Africa until the industrial revolution of the 1870s and 1880s gave priority to mine labour for men. Secondary industry was added to these three areas after the First World War. But for black women particularly, domestic service has remained, along with agriculture, the most prominent sphere of wage employment. Some 88 per cent of all domestic workers in South Africa today are black, and again 88 per cent of these African house servants are women. Altogether, almost 800,000 African women are domestic workers at the moment. However, as Jacklyn Cock has commented, domestic service has had a 'kaleidoscopic' history, with people of all races and both sexes employed, perhaps side by side, at various times.

We are well aware that official statistics must be used critically as they have obvious limitations. For example, categories shift over time: African women 'gainfully occupied' include 'peasants' in 1936 but not in 1970 (see Table VII below); how to define a 'domestic servant' is particularly problematic in rural areas. Again, it is difficult to assess the significance of domestic labour as a source of income for black women given the non-enumeration in census reports of many 'informal sector' earning activities, especially illegal liquor-brewing. Nevertheless, with all their shortcomings, the official nationwide domestic servant statistics are highly illuminating. Table 1 opposite shows how domestic service, while still employing people right across the board, has become a markedly more female occupation in this century. Just after the 1910 Act of Union, 45 per cent of all servants, both urban and rural combined, were men; in
### Table I

**Domestic Servants in Urban and Rural South Africa, 1911 and 1970**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All races:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>120,985</td>
<td>556,089</td>
<td>130,561</td>
<td>258,827</td>
<td>251,546</td>
<td>814,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62,276</td>
<td>67,191</td>
<td>50,856</td>
<td>20,216</td>
<td>113,132</td>
<td>87,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>1,043</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2,608</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6,835</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>9,463</td>
<td>1,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>763</td>
<td>3,083</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62,124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20,704</td>
<td>82,828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60,711(^b)</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>49,813(^b)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>110,524(^b)</td>
<td>153 (^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51,874(^c)</td>
<td>1,591</td>
<td>77,077(^c)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>128,951(^c)</td>
<td>1,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64,481</td>
<td></td>
<td>19,351</td>
<td></td>
<td>83,832</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>423,694</td>
<td></td>
<td>217,486</td>
<td></td>
<td>641,180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* 1911 Census, V, 708-9; 1970 Census, Occupations, Report No.02-05-11, Table 1.

- a. In the 1970 Census the labels used are 'Not on farms' and 'On farms'.
- b. Male 'Other than European'.
- c. Female 'Other than European'.

The racial categories employed are those of the official census.
1970 males constituted only 11 per cent of the total, and it is in rural areas that their numbers have dropped sharply to less than half the 1911 figure (rural servants of both sexes declined in importance from 51.9 per cent to 31.7 per cent of the total in those years). The racial composition has shifted greatly too (see also Table IIa), with white servants decreasing noticeably in significance, even though the 1920s saw a temporary influx of impoverished Afrikaner women into service. Looking at Table IIb we can see that in 1911, one in 20 servants was white; in 1970, only one in 400. Finally, whereas black women comprised less than a third of all servants in 1911, they were over three-quarters of the total by 1970.

### Table IIa

**European Domestic Servants in South Africa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,608</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9,463</td>
<td>7,545</td>
<td>11,432</td>
<td>6,609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** 1911 Census, V, 708-9; 1921 Census, VI, 23,29; 1926 Census, Report, 184; 1936 Census, VII, xxv.

### Table IIb

**Changing Racial and Gender Composition of Domestic Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All white servants as per cent of all domestic servants</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All women servants as per cent of all domestic servants</td>
<td>55.02</td>
<td>89.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African women servants as per cent of all domestic servants</td>
<td>30.72</td>
<td>78.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Derives from above figures, but using figure for black women servants in 1911 from Table 5 below.

No overall historical account of domestic service in South Africa has yet been written, but the two regionally specific studies of the Grahamstown Area by Cock and of Johannesburg by Van Onselen point to the two contrasting patterns which emerged. In the town and on the farms of the Cape and Orange Free State (OFS), women generally predominated in the performance of domestic tasks in settler homes. There were racial variations of course: in Cape Town, coloured women servants have long been in the majority, while around Grahamstown in the 19th century, it was African women who gradually replaced white women as cooks, nursemaids and general house servants. A very different situation developed in Natal and the Transvaal, particularly in Durban and along the gold mining Witwatersrand. Although white female domestic labour had some initial importance on the Reef, and was especially encouraged by female emigration societies after the Boer War, it was black men who early cornered the labour
market. African women servants began to outnumber them only round the time of the Second World War. Tables III and IV illustrate this gender contrast for Africans between the two areas. For example, the Cape and Natal were almost exact opposites in 1911 — the Cape with female servants outnumbering males about three to one (clearly so in the 1920s), Natal with three times as many men as women in domestic work. By the 1920s, female numbers began catching up male in the Transvaal and Natal. The gender gap in the OFS, by contrast, had widened most out of all the provinces, and women domestic workers were over five times as numerous as men (Table III). The servant sector in towns in the Cape Province and Natal, even in 1936, still differed strikingly in its gender composition (Table IV).

Table III

African Domestic Servants by Province, 1911 and 1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male 1911</th>
<th>Female 1911</th>
<th>Male 1921</th>
<th>Female 1921</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape</td>
<td>11,624</td>
<td>31,768</td>
<td>25,352</td>
<td>76,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natal</td>
<td>19,417</td>
<td>6,335</td>
<td>17,845</td>
<td>13,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transvaal</td>
<td>40,466</td>
<td>16,371</td>
<td>38,328</td>
<td>33,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Free State</td>
<td>17,925</td>
<td>22,804</td>
<td>7,428</td>
<td>39,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>89,432</td>
<td>77,278</td>
<td>88,953</td>
<td>162,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1911 Census, V. Table VIII; 1921 Census, VIII, Table 24.

Table IV

Urban African Domestic Servants in 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>1,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Elizabeth</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>4,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East London</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>6,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>2,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>13,708</td>
<td>5,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>6,941</td>
<td>5,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>22,297</td>
<td>22,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witwatersrand</td>
<td>31,897</td>
<td>38,297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 1936, IX, Table 14.

Note: Low African female figures in Cape Town would be counter-balanced by large numbers of ‘Coloured’ women.

Because of the published material available, this paper as a whole focuses on urban rather than rural domestic servants. The history of agricultural labour in South Africa is a very under-researched area. But there is a further drawback. The rural household with its agricultural enterprise is different in nature from an urban home and therefore not strictly comparable with it. Similarly, African
women's housework on farms has often been of an intermittent nature or combined with other productive tasks like weeding and reaping, making it unlike full-time resident domestic service. Black women on white farms from the turn of century were generally there because their fathers or husbands were squatters or labour tenants. The woman's obligation to work in the farmer's house was, in line with existing gender relations, invariably part of any labour agreement with their men. Women thus had even less choice about employment than men, and were paid much less than urban women servants. In more recent times, since 1960, the increasing capitalisation of agriculture, the changing structure of the white household, and higher labour costs have all led farmers to cut down steadily on house servants. Only 8 per cent of all farm workers in 1973 were classified as domestic workers. More than two-thirds of all domestic servants now work in towns as opposed to rural areas (Table I above), so this has clearly become the key sector.

The two historically very different routes to the same eventual outcome — domestic service as overwhelmingly black and female — need now to be explored in greater depth. As our introduction has already made clear, to explain this development we need to investigate changing patterns of racial and sexual domination in South Africa, and their connection with changing patterns of economic development and employment. While the demand for servants was a changing one, in line with shifts in the nature of the employing households, the labour of domestic servants was early built into white settler expectations. The supply of African domestic labour was shaped in particular areas by the nature of African proletarianisation and urbanisation, and the sexual composition of the migrant workforce.

The Cape and the OFS: Female-dominated Domestic Service
In the Western Cape initially, both urban and rural domestic service were mostly performed by slaves, Africans from Madagascar and Delagoa Bay together with some Asians. The early colonists had opted for slave labour instead of immigrant white labour because it was cheaper and more controllable and some officials considered that it was more fitting for slaves than free whites to do menial work. By 1828 there were 13,860 female and 18,383 male slaves at the Cape. By the time of emancipation in 1834, slave domestic labourers numbered 15,000. The women were employed as skilled seamstresses, wet-nurses and child-rearers, while Malay men particularly worked as cooks and butlers.

In the Eastern Cape, Dutch farmers generally took on landless Khoi as agricultural and domestic workers, though captured San women and children and, after 1777, coerced Xhosa also made up the labour force. The 5,000 assisted English immigrants who arrived in 1820 developed a different employment pattern. Their use of white labour overlaid the slave image of domestic service with British class-based attitudes, which were subsequently incorporated into racist ideology as whites moved out of service. Africans had been forcibly expelled from the Grahamstown area and the 1820 settlers were forbidden slaves so, while some did their own housework initially, others brought servants from England or hired later servant immigrants arriving from the 1840s. White women servants were thus significant around Grahamstown until the 1880s; by then many had escaped from the low wages and poor conditions into more prestigious work or marriage. Domestic service was becoming predominantly a labour sphere for Africans. Forced into service as refugees or by war, land losses
and the devastating 1856 Cattle Killing, the trickle of black women workers grew steadily, but a combination of African pre-capitalist gender hierarchies, as well as frontier racism, tended to leave them at the bottom of the scale of wage differentiation. Mission education which saturated the Eastern Cape prepared black girls for domestic work, hence perhaps, as Cock suggests, the unusually large proportion thus employed; but the identification of women with ‘household’ tasks, whether in their own home or an employer’s, was widespread in both African and settler society (of course, we must recognise that the households of pre-capitalist black society were very different in nature from those of industrialised Europe).

By 1891 in the Cape, though domestic service remained heterogeneous in character, the proportions by sex were about three to one female to male servants, according to figures which Cock provides (and cf. also Table III), while African women constituted 43 per cent of the overall total.

The Orange Free State had practically no African reserves because most of its Sotho people were compelled into labour tenant or squatter relations with the white farmers, who forcibly displaced them. Later, whole families settled in its small towns, so they also developed very even black sex ratios by comparison with large industrial centres. African women could thus be seen by whites as the most appropriate household help in a context where domestic labour had become firmly associated with servile status. Thus the municipal passes over which there were such militant protests in the Free State in 1913 were intended to force African women and girls into domestic service in white homes. The figures in Table III above show how the movement of African males out of domestic service proceeded the fastest in the OFS in that First World War period — the decrease in numbers for Natal and the Transvaal is much less, while Cape figures for men, by contrast, more than doubled. This shift by black men no doubt helps to account for the urgency with which OFS whites wanted to compel African women into domestic service to replace them.

Natal and the Transvaal: Domestic Service Initially Male-Dominated

Natal had a long history of domestic service by males, even though this ostensibly contradicted the sexual division of labour to which white settlers were accustomed. Van der Horst quotes a magistrate’s comment in 1852 which illustrates the peculiar blend of racism and sexism in settler thought of the time. According to him, black men were employed ‘to a ridiculous extent’ in the colony’s towns. “Where else in the world”, he asked, “would male adults be found performing the offices of nurses to infants and children, or as laundresses of female apparel. These docile achievements are certainly not very congruous with their manly habits nor compatible with the character given them of blood-thirsty savages.” By 1904, there were 33,000 African males working in Natal towns, the majority, it was said, in domestic service. Clearly, women were not migrating to work on the scale of the Cape and the OFS. What is relevant here is the question raised in our introduction about the differential proletarianisation of women arising out of pre-existing gender relations. The control of husbands and fathers was perhaps more intact in communities which had not been disrupted like the refugee Mfengu of the Cape (who, further, were keen recipients of mission education). A viable rural economic base also persisted longer in Natal and Zululand then in the Ciskei or OFS. Where black women were not present in sufficient numbers, sexism (the assumption here of the naturalness of
domesticity to women) yielded to racism and black men performed domestic service.

Likewise, the first black migrants to the Transvaal gold reef were predominantly male. Because the supply of female servants, first white then black, was often inadequate and unsatisfactory to the colonists, the labour of African so-called 'houseboys' was in great demand and well-paid in the first decades of industrial growth. Zulu migrants made this sphere particularly their own, preferring it to unhealthy, poorly paid mine work at which Shangaan men had early developed skills. The pre-existing domestic servant tradition in Natal towns, overlooked by Van Onselen, was probably also critical. Educated married African women settled in Johannesburg complained that men had usurped 'their' rightful female sphere of domestic labour, but male domination of this work persisted until the 1980s, by which time far more women had come to town. Reef employers in the early 20th century also preferred men as they could work them harder (at a time when housework was physically quite demanding), house them more roughly and control them through passes. Women, exempt from passes until the late 1950s, could walk out of a job with greater impunity.

By the time of the Second World War, urbanised young men opted for the higher wages, fixed working hours and residential freedom of shop and office work. It was less educated men from more distant rural areas who then took servant jobs, while female domestic workers tended to be better educated, but from landless families on white farms or from small Highveld towns. The 1945 estimate of Johannesburg servants was 32,000 women and 28,000 men, and this reversed trend in the direction of female preponderance in domestic labour continued. Today, ironically, male servants persist in the city's richer suburbs whereas once the 'houseboy' was the ubiquitous servant of the white working-class household.

In fact, it is the period since the Second World War that would repay deeper examination than is possible here, for the virtual diversion of black men and white women from domestic service was finally accomplished then, leaving this job predominantly an African female one. In the increase of numbers of African women domestic workers from a quarter of a million 45 years ago to over three-quarters of a million now, the decades of most rapid expansion of this job sector came in the 1940s and in the 1960s. Both these decades were times of expansion in the manufacturing sector of industry. Thus black male labour was needed in jobs other than domestic service; more households, too, could afford servants. Both factors served to draw African women into housework jobs. The wartime and 1960s increases show up in Table V.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Servants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>241,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>437,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>440,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>473,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>641,180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Importance of Domestic Service in African Women’s Employment

In the context of a racially and sexually segregated job market, domestic service for African women above all meant access to a wage. They got a foothold in domestic service when women of other races were not available or had escaped its low wages and poor conditions; or when employers found men more expensive to employ or hard to recruit, or when men were considered unsuitable. In the long run, African women stayed in domestic service because of a lack of alternative job opportunities. Table VI below underlines the importance of domestic service to African women, particularly in town. In 1936 (but bear in mind the omission of illicit earnings and the informal sector), around 90 per cent of African women earning money in key urban areas were in domestic service (Table VI, Column 4). Even the figures for the three exceptions were over 80 per cent. Although the centrality of domestic service to African and Coloured women’s economic activity has diminished over time, the contrast with white and Indian women is stark (Table VII). For neither of these latter groups does domestic service now provide significant employment, whereas for both ‘Coloured’ and African women, one in three is employed as a servant. Forty years ago, three out of four African and ‘Coloured’ women in wage employment were domestic workers.

Table VI
Urban African Women Servants as Percentage of Gainfully Occupied in 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Women over 10 years old</th>
<th>Gainfully Occupied No.</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Per cent in Domestic Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>3,285</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>40.88</td>
<td>84.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Elizabeth</td>
<td>10,608</td>
<td>4,434</td>
<td>41.80</td>
<td>91.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East London</td>
<td>10,426</td>
<td>6,805</td>
<td>65.27</td>
<td>90.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>5,583</td>
<td>2,433</td>
<td>43.58</td>
<td>96.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pietermaritzburg</td>
<td>3,560</td>
<td>2,257</td>
<td>63.40</td>
<td>80.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>12,507</td>
<td>6,539</td>
<td>52.28</td>
<td>84.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretoria</td>
<td>12,888</td>
<td>5,922</td>
<td>45.95</td>
<td>90.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witwatersrand, of which</td>
<td>85,065</td>
<td>42,733</td>
<td>50.24</td>
<td>90.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>49,313</td>
<td>24,781</td>
<td>50.25</td>
<td>91.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Rand municipalities</td>
<td>35,752</td>
<td>17,952</td>
<td>50.21</td>
<td>89.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloemfontein</td>
<td>13,630</td>
<td>5,895</td>
<td>43.25</td>
<td>89.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1936 Census, IX, xviii.

Race and sex discrimination kept black women out of the clerical, sales and factory jobs for which women in Britain, and white women in South Africa, deserted domestic service. The low wages and immobility of these servants made it possible for South Africa to retain an unusually large domestic service sector in a modern industrial society.

Domestic Workers Today

The conditions of domestic workers in present-day South Africa have been vividly documented in Jacklyn Cock’s book, *Maids & Madams*, which was published in South Africa in 1980 to the accompaniment of a storm of comment.
The book was labelled ‘a shock sociological assessment’ and extensively reviewed under such headlines as ‘Is there a slave in your kitchen?’ It occasioned numerous letters to the press and columns of editorial comment. Partly this seems because the book made public that relation between maid and madam which was private and sensitive. But the response also seems part of white South Africa’s reaction to increased pressure and exposure of the iniquities of apartheid. As such the response should be placed in the context of certain ‘reformist’ trends in the South African state.

Table VII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>131,593</td>
<td>447,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>300,573</td>
<td>1,985,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>72,784</td>
<td>252,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3,710</td>
<td>34,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>6,609</td>
<td>1,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>32.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derived from 1936 Census, VII, pars. 7, 29, 32, 37, 38, 43; IX, par. 7; 1970 Census, Report No.02-01-05, Table 1 and 02-05-11, Table 1.

Note: The 1,618,746 African women enumerated as ‘peasants’ among the ‘gainfully occupied’ in the 1936 Census have been omitted here. If they are included (under col. x then domestic servants (col. 3) constitute 12.6 per cent (col. 5) of the gainfully occupied. These figures are for all servants, both urban and rural.

The post-1976 period in South Africa has been called by Judy Seidman an era of ‘facelift apartheid’. Many of the petty restrictions of the Verwoerd and Vorster regimes disappeared, leaving the fundamental structures of political disenfranchisement, control, terrorisation and poverty unchanged. But in pointing to this appearance/reality dichotomy, the changes initiated by the Botha regime must not be overlooked.

A key group of changes derive from the findings of the Wiehahn Commission. This commission was set up to investigate labour legislation and made its first report in 1978, a time when worker militancy had reached a peak unknown since the 1950s and a large number of unregistered unions had formed among black workers. Unregistered unions existed in a twilight zone of semi-legality. They should not represent their members in terms of the act covering collective bargaining, but they were not in themselves illegal. From the early 1970s workers had taken strike action and demanded higher pay, often winning significant concessions. The Wiehahn Commission set out to investigate and regulate this situation. The major reform that derived from its report was the Labour Relations Act of 1981 which replaced the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 and the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act of 1953. These laws had excluded black workers from the definition of a worker and so had prevented black unions participating in collective bargaining, although not from organising. The Labour Relations Act provided for the registration of unions with black or non-racial membership and their participation in statutory labour relations.
procedure. It also extended state control to unregistered unions and replaced liaison and works committees with plant-level works councils.

However, one significant area of labour legislation on which the Wiehahn Commission did not report was that covering domestic workers. As a result, domestic workers are still not covered by the Labour Relations Act or the Wage Act, which stipulates a minimum wage for each industry. There is thus no legal provision for contracts of employment, negotiating procedure, sickness benefit or pension rights. The domestic workers' only rights are in common law which certain statutes may override and as most are women who, if married in community of property, are considered perpetual minors in South African law, many cannot bring actions in their own right. Some revision of this situation appears to be contemplated. In August 1981 the Wiehahn Commission tabled a report in parliament recommending an investigation of the possibility of extending trade union rights to farm workers and domestic servants (Star, 29 August 1981). The Minister of Manpower announced in February 1982 that the National Manpower Commission would investigate methods of laying down minimum conditions of employment for workers in these sectors. However, he added that '... there are in South Africa a variety of factors which militate against the institution of formalised or structured conditions. Factors which are peculiar to this sector and which must be taken into consideration are the intimate relationships between employers ... and their domestic servants' (Cape Times, 22 February 1982). This way of declaring grandiose schemes of reform which turn out to be very limited in practice typifies this so-called reformist period and has been a feature of the way the Wiehahn reforms have been effected. Although black unions have been registered and have won certain advantages for their members as a result, these gains have had to be weighed against increased state bureaucratic control of the unions, and distrust by the workers of involvement with state structures.

The suspicion of the Wiehahn reforms expressed by many industrial workers has been echoed by the domestic workers' unions, though as in the industrial unions there is division as to how the new proposals should be regarded. This division accords with the major distinction between the domestic workers' unions, where two main trends have emerged. The first is associated with liberal and church bodies like DWEP (Domestic Workers and Employers Project), which have initiated projects among domestic workers; the second is a move toward forming unions which has originated with the workers themselves. Some examples are the Domestic Workers' Association and the National Domestic Workers' Union.

DWEP was begun in 1972 by the liberal body, the South African Institute of Race Relations. Its aim was '...to bring about an improvement in the position of domestic workers by helping to create a better understanding between a worker and an employer, by revising working and wage conditions of domestic workers, and trying to improve their status and personal image.' The DWEP initiative is close to the viewpoint of the anthropologists Whisson and Weil, writing in the early 1970s in a study published by the South African Institute of Race Relations. In their book Domestic Servants, based on interviews with Cape Town employers, they concluded that the needs of both sides, employers and employees, were far more complex than the exchange of labour for cash and kind implied. They called for the problems of domestic service to be tackled with an acknowledgement of this complexity and for the needs of both sides to be met. In their analysis this
amounted to higher wages, a less personal form of contract, and some improvement in the inferior status of the employee. Much of the attention of DWEP has focused on the same concerns and in its approach, which bring ‘maids and madams’ together in joint centres of concern, it echoes the Whisson and Weil emphasis on interdependence. Thus DWEP established complaints offices and centres of concern on the Witwatersrand and in Natal, East London and Cape Town. Their main work was taking up complaints about wages and teaching domestic workers to improve their skills and increase their earning power. DWEP’s initiative was followed up by the South African Council of Churches Women’s Desk which set up a consultative service for domestic workers. This approach through advice and conscientisation involving employers and workers seems typical of the church and liberal approach to helping domestic workers.

Emerging from this standpoint, DWEP cannot perform any organisational role for domestic workers, nor can it articulate the specific interests of workers whose concerns cannot be identified with their employers beyond the point of the contract of employment. In practice, DWEP acknowledges this by the attention it gives to individual hardship cases, where employers may extend kindly patronage, rather than the articulation of organised demands in the common interest of all servants. A literacy worker for DWEP commented that the employers helping at centres of concern often seemed oblivious that their activity there was dependent on the assistance of their own servant at home.

The DWEP approach came under heavy criticism recently. In October 1980 some of its members supported the Cape Provincial Council (CPC) in drafting legislation to oblige householders to keep a register of all their domestic workers’ personal documentation and to make duplicate keys to domestic workers’ rooms available to police and government officials at all times. This legislation had resulted from the findings of a CPC Commission and had been recommended to the Commission by many employers associated with DWEP and similar projects. Some employers went as far as claiming that their servants worked as prostitutes and saw the legislation as a means to control their social life. In Sea Point, Cape Town, the more radical domestic workers’ union, the Domestic Workers’ Association, headed by Maggie Oewies, expressed the outrage of workers at this collaboration and refused to sit on the same platform as ‘liberal’ bodies which, said Maggie Oewies, ‘... provided tea and sympathy rather than treating the roots of the domestic workers’ problems’ (Herald, 19 October 1980). The DWA distributed pamphlets protesting at the legislation and its intervention on this issue increased its membership in the area.

Despite these limitations, DWEP has attempted to form a union amongst live-in servants. This union remains closely associated with DWEP and still reflects DWEP’s conception of domestic workers. The union, SADWA (South African Domestic Workers’ Association), was set up in February 1981. Domestic workers, who were members of DWEP, approved a constitution read to them by the director of DWEP, Mrs Leah Tutu (wife of Bishop Tutu), and elected a committee. SADWA’s aims are similar to those of DWEP: protecting the domestic servant against hardship and abuse by employers, officials and the state, setting up an office to receive complaints, negotiating with employers on behalf of individual servants (Sowetan, 27 February 1981). The officers of DWEP still appear to be the major force in SADWA, for when a branch of the union was established in the Cape, it was launched by Mrs Tutu and not by the office bearers
DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

105

elected at the Johannesburg meeting (Cape Herald, 18 July 1981).

By contrast, the second approach to the unionisation of domestic workers has developed out of the initiatives of workers, acting without reference to employers. The Domestic Workers' Association, with a membership of several thousand, represents a trend toward independent unions established by the workers themselves. A beginning in this direction was made in 1960 when the Domestic Workers' Union, one of the non-racial unions associated with SACTU, tried to unionise domestic workers. In those days the union faced great obstacles because workers, isolated in the private homes of their employers, risked intimidation for attending union meetings. The repression of the 1960s greatly weakened the union but after the upsurge of worker militancy in the 1970s and 1980s, similar organisations have emerged. The DWA is active both in unionising domestic workers and in propagating a wage claim of R110 a month. In May 1981 the National Domestic Workers' Union held a meeting in Durban. Members of the committee spoke of their organisation of discussion groups in the townships and hostels. The general secretary of the union, Mr M. Oliphant (it should be remembered that large numbers of domestic servants in Natal are men), addressed the meeting of workers, outlining their disabilities under present legislation and concluded that the time was past for talking and the workers wanted action. A similar tone was evident in Port Elizabeth earlier in the year when, under the auspices of the cultural association 'Roots', based in the township, a committee of domestic workers was set up which called for a minimum R100 per month cash wage plus bus fare. In August this committee constituted itself as the Domestic Workers and Sales Ladies Association, established links with the Domestic Workers Association in Cape Town, and stated that it would concentrate on fighting for higher salaries and better working conditions (Cape Times, 5 May 1981; Daily Despatch, 5 May 1981; Rand Daily Mail, 28 January 1981; Herald, 15 August 1981).

In general it appears that the independent unions with specific wage claims and action aimed at particular legislation emerged in areas where domestic workers have ceased to be live-in servants. Broadly in South Africa at present there is a trend toward replacing live-in servants with daily chars who commute from adjacent townships. A major reason for this shift is the increasing stringency with which, following the Riekert Commission (1978), legislation on residence of Africans in the urban areas has been administered. It is now less easy for an employer to have an unregistered servant living in by informal agreement with the authorities. At the same time certain servants in certain areas have calculated that working as a char and holding a number of jobs might yield higher wages than working as a full-time servant for one employer. Moreover, some employers, given the recession, have cut down on the number of servants they employ and prefer a weekly char. An additional dimension which may have bearing on this trend is the increasing anxiety with which South African whites view the rising level of urban unrest and fears and suspicions they may entertain about their servants, whom they might prefer not to have living in their homes.

Workers living in townships have been involved more closely with the general upsurge of militancy in South Africa in the last few years than have the isolated servants in private homes. In Port Elizabeth it can be seen that the domestic workers' union emerged out of a general community association, and in Durban that the union was based in the hostel and township and not in the white suburb.
It appears that it is easier for workers to form unions when they are not closely tied to the relations of dependence and private exploitation in the relations of maids and madams. Domestic workers must have been inspired by the activities of whole communities uniting in actions like bus boycotts and the red meat boycott.

The difference in the two approaches to organising workers has emerged clearly in the response to the Minister of Manpower's announcement of an investigation into domestic workers' conditions of employment. DWEP saw the investigation as very welcome because it would remedy the domestic workers' lack of legal rights. Maggie Oewies of the DWA, by contrast, was more guarded. She hoped that the investigation would not be 'the beginning of a systematic attack on the development of independent domestic and farm workers' organisations'. She saw how the government had interfered in the affairs of independent worker organisations by prescribing how they should operate and by laying down minimum wages below the average being paid. DWEP's comments echoed those of the English-language press, liberal academics and white opposition parties, while the DWA observations are close to those of the unions which have opposed registration under the Wiehahn legislation. The demarcation between the two forms of organisation still remains. DWEP articulates liberal white concern, while the independent unions are close to the aspirations of opposition movements based in the black townships.

More recently, the division between the organisations was apparent when a building society launched a pension plan for domestic workers. The plan, welcomed and approved by DWEP, envisaged contributions being paid by workers alone. Maggie Oewies, on behalf of DWA, remarked that the whole point about a pension scheme was that employers should contribute. She asked, 'Which domestic can afford to pay R20 a month into a pension scheme when they are already living on the breadline?' (Argus, 8 November 1982). Once again the link between DWEP and an establishment body like the Natal Building Society marks the organisation off from the DWA, which speaks of the day-to-day hardships of domestic workers.

However, although there are clear areas of divergence between the domestic workers' unions associated with DWEP and those independent of it, the differences should not be overstated. The situation remains extremely fluid. There has been an interchange of views on the approach to organising domestic workers, and there is considerable overlap in aims and activity among the two groups; SADWA is still a new union and may develop in a number of different directions. Overall the position of the domestic workers' unions has some common features with that of industrial workers' unions in South Africa at present. As yet their membership comprises a minority of workers and their existence and survival remain precarious. However, the significance of the general unions and the domestic workers' unions extends far beyond the number of members involved. The very emergence of unions amongst workers, who for so long lacked any organisation, indicates a new era.

Conclusion
The new trend towards unionisation amongst South African domestic workers gives ground for cautious optimism. In analysing some of the historical and structural aspects of the situation of these workers, we have questioned in this
paper the powerful ideological consensus that domestic service is naturally predetermined as 'women’s work’. Rather, the relegation of large numbers of African women workers to this sector of wage labour in South Africa is a product of the complex operation of class, race and gender divisions over time. One serious implication of this analysis is that in order to challenge this particular pattern of job segregation, all three of these social divisions need to be confronted. At present African domestic servants, when mobilised, tend to identify themselves primarily either as workers or as members of the oppressed black nation, or a combination of both. They do not necessarily see themselves as confronting their subordination as women. However, this mobilisation is an important step forward and will help ensure that South African women domestic workers can never return to that historical silence to which they have been condemned for so long. It would be foolish to speculate on the implications of the particular battles South African women may fight as domestic workers without a closer look at the role they are playing in other struggles. But clearly the challenge they are offering to the conventional image of black maids submissive to their white madams, or women subordinate to their men, gives an additional dimension to their fight.

Bibliographic Note
For extracts quoted in Introduction see Hazel V. Carby, 'White Women Listen: Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, The Empire Strikes Back: Race & Racism in '70s Britain (Hutchinson, London, 1982).


The provision of wage employment for women, in Nigeria as elsewhere, is not in itself a means towards the liberation of women. On the contrary, such jobs reproduce and reinforce gender subordination as this study of women workers in a textile factory in Nigeria confirms. However, the internationalisation of the gender division of labour through the employment of women as cheap labour does not necessarily follow the same paths as those documented, for example, in the world market factories in Asia and Latin America. Historical patterns and cultural attitudes concerning women’s rights to work and women’s ‘aptitudes’ effect the pattern of integration of women in the industrial labour market, as do the levels and forms of industrialisation and the political and economic circumstances of this particular factory in Nigeria.

The relationship between women and men in capitalist societies is dependent upon the opportunities for economic independence available to women and the status of the occupations accessible to them. This paper will examine the manner in which industrial development in Nigeria has so far offered very limited opportunities for women in industrial labour despite the fact that historically women have
participated in productive labour and are still expected to contribute significantly to household maintenance.

In many Third World countries in both Asia and Latin America, as industrialisation has occurred, a characteristic pattern of industrial employment for women has developed. This involves the use of women, especially the young and unmarried, as a cheap source of labour in labour-intensive industries using old established or modern technologies, such as textile plants and electronics factories. In Nigeria, and in West Africa generally, such a use of women's labour in similar industries has not (yet) occurred. This suggests that the characteristics of women's employment in the Third World is the result of particular configurations of family structure, ideological conceptions of women and patterns of industrialisation. This paper describes the historical participation of women in productive labour in Nigerian societies, the pattern of one kind of industrial development in Nigeria and the origins of one factory in the Yoruba speaking areas of Western Nigeria. This factory draws much of its male labour from the 'non-formal' trading and artisan sector of the Nigerian economy in which women and men have both historically participated. The non-formal sector is seen as a preferred form of employment by both women and men. For men, industrial wage labour represents a valued stage in a 'career' towards a profitable trading or artisan enterprise. For women, however, the factory has offered few jobs which, in their turn, offer a much less certain opportunity to engage in trade or artisan production in the non-formal sector in which, for other reasons as well, they are becoming increasingly marginalised.

**Industrialisation in Nigeria**

Since independence, successive Nigerian governments have sought to encourage industrialisation as a means of bringing about 'economic development' and generating employment. This process was given new impetus by the development of the oil industry, which gave the Nigerian Federal Government potential investment resources and private foreign investors the opportunity for profitable business ventures. The favoured pattern of investment was between the Federal or a State Government and a 'technical partner', always a foreign firm as no Nigerian entrepreneur had the industrial capital or technical expertise for such ventures, preferring rather the higher and faster returns in property development and importing. Early industrial ventures were in import substitution enterprises such as drink bottling and textile manufacturing with a co-operative agreement between a government and a multinational company. The industrial structure has expanded to allow multinational investment in, for example, car assembly plants and tobacco production while there are several industrial estates containing large and small factories producing cheap clothing, plastic goods and so on.

The tendency is for all these types of enterprises to be concentrated in Lagos, Kano, Ibadan and Port Harcourt which offer advantages of accessibility to raw materials, markets and labour. However, since the establishment of industry is seen as an indicator of economic development, governments at all administrative levels have tried to attract industrial investment. One of the most significant political developments in Nigeria since independence has been the manner in which demands for jobs and 'development' has been articulated as the demand for more states. The number of administrative units has increased from three regions to the present 19 states since independence, with continuing agitation for
the creation of more states. The establishment of each new state has meant the
construction of new administrative facilities, creating clerical employment, more
money for local capital projects and more governments wishing to attract
industrial investment as a sign of 'development' and to create wage earning
employment. For those states without the advantages desired by multinational
technical partners, it has been very difficult to establish viable industrial
enterprises. One such venture was the Odu'Atex Textile factory at Ado-Ekiti
established in 1966.

Women in the Nigerian economy
In pre-capitalist Nigerian economies, nearly all production was carried out within
the household unit in which women provided both productive and reproductive
labour. Women looked after children and cooked, but they also farmed and
processed and marketed food and other agricultural products. Younger women
and children were more likely to have been responsible for 'purely' domestic
tasks, leaving older women free to concentrate on the more specialised
occupations. The degree of specialisation and the range of occupations open to
women varied from one society to another and within societies, between
communities according to size. Yoruba communities tended to be larger than
those of some other Nigerian societies and in such urban centres it appears to
have been less usual for women to devote their time to farming on their
husbands’ farms and more common for them to concentrate on production trading. This developed in larger towns into the trading of processed and cooked
food, buying and bulking foodstuffs and retailing in other goods such as cloth.
Women’s participation in production, trade and marketing persisted throughout
the colonial period.

The historical participation of women in productive labour in the urban and rural
economies has meant that there is no ‘tradition’ in Nigeria that women should be
excluded from income-earning opportunities nor, in southern Nigeria, that these
should be confined within the household. Women are expected to have a ‘trade’ to
provide them with an income which will enable them to meet a considerable
proportion of household expenses. Today, this expectation has expanded to allow
that women should not only acquire a ‘trade’ but also, if necessary, should be able
to enter salaried occupations or wage labour. Male concern about such matters,
as expressed for example in the media, does not centre on whether women should
or should not work, but on whether a working woman might become so rich and
successful that she ceased to be financially and domestically dependent upon a
husband and will no longer convey an appropriately subordinate female role and
status to her children. This acceptance that women should have paid work is also
related to the relatively high rate of polygyny in Yoruba society. In practice,
many women carry a heavy burden of responsibility for meeting household
expenses and bringing up their children which makes it essential that they
possess an independent source of income. The widespread approval of polygyny
by men requires that they accept that women should work outside the home.

The education of women has, however, lagged behind that of men in Nigeria as in
most other countries and has excluded many from new types of employment. The
majority of Yoruba women try to carry on the activities from which they have
historically generated an income: trading in foodstuffs, venturing into
commodity trading if they have the capital and opportunity, carrying on such
crafts as weaving or establishing themselves as self-employed seamstresses. But
the economic conditions under which such small-scale enterprises used to be performed have now changed. The generation of a reasonable turn-over requires the initial investment of more capital than most women can obtain. While men, as we shall see, wishing to enter similar small-scale enterprises as self-employed traders or artisans, have been able to accumulate savings for the initial capital investment from wage labour, women have been severely disadvantaged in the labour market. Amongst the professional and semi-skilled occupations, none are in theory closed to women while there are some, in Nigeria as elsewhere, which are conventionally regarded as ‘suitable’ for women, such as clerical work, primary school teaching and nursing. However, in Nigeria not only have such jobs been in short supply until, for example, the expansion of education in the 1960s and 1970s, but also the initial qualifications have been more accessible to men than to women. Meanwhile, unskilled wage labour in the industrial sector, even of the type which elsewhere in the world has become the domain of low-paid women workers, has recruited largely from the male labour market.

The numbers of women working in the still relatively small industrial sector in Nigeria is unknown. The large multinational firms making or assembling heavy goods do not appear to employ women on the shop floor. Most women are employed in small firms producing cheap consumer goods or in seasonal industrial employment such as food processing even though not all these firms recruit any or all of their employees from the female labour market. While there is public acknowledgement of the need to provide jobs for women as for men, and women are certainly seeking such jobs, employers have been resistant. This can be attributed, perhaps, to two factors. First, employers tend to believe that women do not work as hard as men and that they are more prone to absenteeism. In other words, employers in Nigeria do not perceive women as docile workers. Secondly, regulations concerning maternity benefits, maternity leave and shift work are disincentives to the employment of women, especially married women or women with children, in conditions of an over supply of cheap labour in the labour market. In the following case study, management employed women for ‘political’ rather than ‘economic’ reasons then segregated them into ‘dead end’ jobs. In fact, women proved to be no less committed than men to wage labour, but gender stereotyping discriminated against women employees using the experience of employment as a form of occupational investment which was the advantage that men consciously sought for.

The Odu’Atex Factory
The Odu’Atex Textile Factory was established in Ado-Ekiti in what is now Ondo State in 1966. It was then known as the Westexinco Factory. The detailed circumstances behind its establishment have been described elsewhere (Afonja and Dennis: 1973, 1976). There had been a tradition of hand weaving in Ado and a co-operative was established in the 1950s using improved hand looms. Ekiti had been a relatively underdeveloped area of Yorubaland until the 1950s when cocoa cultivation increased very rapidly and in the 1960s there was a rapid expansion of educational facilities. The Odu’Atex Factory was established in response to strong local pressure, articulated through an educated and dynamic traditional ruler and well-known figures from the area, to provide employment for those who had hitherto to migrate to find work and also to act as a focus for economic development. In fact, it has proved to be an economic success and has had to expand to accommodate the increased demand for its products.

*There are no figures available on the numbers of women employed in industrial enterprises in Nigeria nor any reliable estimates of the ratio of women to men.
development in the town. It has been subject to changes of ownership and has had a somewhat erratic history of financial viability. At present, it is owned by the Odua Corporation, an investment holding company established by Ogun, Oyo and Ondo State Governments which is trying to make the enterprise commercially viable.

For most of its existence, the Odu'Atex Factory has not been a viable enterprise and if it had been a privately owned factory, it would presumably have been closed down a long time ago. But if it had been a privately owned factory, it is extremely unlikely that it would have been established in Ado-Ekiti at all. The political pressure for industrial enterprises to be dispersed to relatively small rural communities such as Ado led to the signing of agreements between State Governments and technical partners who were not multinational corporations and did not have either the technical expertise or the capital to match the potential opportunities. Such enterprises were rarely financially viable and constituted a continual drain on the resources of the state concerned, as has the Odu'Atex Factory. Thus the history of the factory is a function of the manner in which 'regional development' was implemented in a political economy such as Nigeria. The desire of management to present the factory as of great benefit to Ado Ekiti, rather than any preference or need for women workers, led since its inception to a small proportion of jobs being reserved especially for women and, at various times such as when this study was being carried out, to considerable over-'manning'.

The Odu’Atex Workers

This study of the male and female workers at Odu’Atex began in 1972, not long after the factory was opened. Our concern is only with this period of its history. At that time the factory employed 1,300 men and 62 women. All the women and a random sample of 371 men were interviewed for information on their occupational experience and perceptions of factory employment.

Both men and women workers at Odu’Atex were young: 70 per cent of the men and 95 per cent of the women were below the age of 30. It is this age group, at least in the case of men, which has historically migrated in search of wage employment. The women workers were younger than the men: 75 per cent were below the age of 25. Being young, the majority of the women (63 per cent) were unmarried. There was no stated policy on the part of management to recruit single women. The evidence available, however, is that married women, with or without children, were and are, eager for stable, wage-earning employment at various stages in their working lives, if not as a permanent source of livelihood. It appears likely that management were attempting to avoid the necessity of providing for maternity leave by employing single women. The lack of child-care facilities, however, either in the factory or in the town, militated against women with children seeking work or remaining in employment once child-bearing.

The level of education of a given group of workers is an indicator both of the category of persons seeking that type of employment and of employers’ requirements and preferences in relation to their labour force. The latter evidently vary according to the nature of the labour market available. The Ekiti area possessed a relatively large number of education institutions since the expansion of education in the 1960s and it was possible for employers to insist on a higher level of education amongst their employees than elsewhere in Nigeria. At Odu’Atex, all but 1 per cent of the male workers, and all the women, has
received some formal education. Forty-three per cent of male employees had been to secondary modern schools which had been instituted to provide some form of cheaper secondary education to primary school leavers when feel-paying secondary grammar schools were prohibitively expensive. The women workers overall had equal if not better education than the male workers. Thirty-three per cent of them had spent some years at secondary grammar schools. In most cases, their parents had been unable to find the fees to allow them to finish their education and obtain the West African School Certificate which can lead to further education or salaried employment. Thus, both men and women were recruited from amongst those whose education, even if uncompleted, led to expectations of wage earning employment in Nigeria. In practice, there were few such employment opportunities available locally, if at all. Educational opportunities massively outstripped the availability of wage employment in Ekiti and employers were able to demand high levels of education. The fact that the educational levels of women exceeded those of men employees indicates the problems of such women seeking wage employment which the scanty quota of women's jobs at Odu'Atex scarcely resolved.

The majority (75 per cent) of both women and men workers at Odu'Atex came from in or near Ado-Ekiti. This was not an area to which people would migrate in search of wage employment and the employees from outside the area were mostly skilled, experienced workers recruited by management from textile factories in Lagos. A higher proportion (41 per cent) of the women workers compared to the men (33 per cent) came from the town of Ado-Ekiti itself. Young women were less likely to go far from home to find wage employment than young men. This factor, combined with the paucity of other wage or salaried employment in the town, contributed to the ease which which management was able to recruit a relatively well educated female labour force.

The Careers of Odu'Atex Workers
The fact has been well documented in Nigeria that male workers at least tend to be highly mobile between the 'formal' and the 'non-formal' sectors of the economy. Individuals move from wage employment to self-employment and vice versa as and when opportunity and relative advantage arise. Until recently, and especially as a result of the impact of oil revenues upon the economy, there were considerable opportunities within the private and non-formal sectors in such enterprises as construction and trading in imported goods. The model of success for the industrial workers and others in Nigeria has been that of the private businessman who appeared to have unlimited supplies of cash to distribute. Individuals, men at least, perceived their working life as a career involving a series of steps, the criteria of success being increasing wealth at each stage. The actual pattern by which the individual expected to achieve this progression varied according to the qualifications and financial resources with which he started. Mobility between one form of employment and another and indeed holding down a job as a wage earner while running a small business on the side formed a recognised part of this pattern. In such a situation, the former employment of workers, their perceptions of the utility of their current employment and their plans for the future indicates the kind of 'career' which appears realistic to an industrial worker. Neither the mobility nor indeed the 'careers' of women industrial workers have been as well documented. As this study will show, women are severely disadvantaged in attempting to pursue the 'male' career pattern, however much they might find it a desirable one. The contrast reflects
the differential processes of incorporation of women as part of the industrial labour force in Nigeria.

In 1972, few of the workers had been employed at Odu’Atex for more than two or three years. About 20 per cent of women and men workers had never had any previous employment, either because they had been too young or because they had been unable to find a job. The majority had had previous employment in a wide range of occupations. Of male workers, only 15 per cent had been in non-manual/clerical jobs. The remainder had been employed in textile factories elsewhere or as employed or self-employed mechanics and construction workers such as bricklayers. By contrast, of the women 39 per cent had had non-manual/clerical jobs while most of the remainder had been previously employed as weavers in the co-operative centre or had been petty traders. Almost all women and men who had been in wage employment said that they had left their previous jobs because wages had been too small or paid irregularly or both. The only exceptions were those textile workers who had returned to Ekiti from Lagos because of the high cost of living and urban problems. The non-manual/clerical workers had been either uncertificated teachers or unqualified clerical workers on low wages with limited career prospects in the face of competition from better qualified candidates then presenting themselves for employment since the expansion of the educational system in the 1960s. The independent craftsmen such as mechanics and traders, however, formed a different category. They had not rejected their previous work for industrial employment like the clerical workers. In most cases, their trading or business capital had been too small, or had been eroded by misadventure or social exigencies, to generate a living wage. They sought paid work to supplement their income from other sources, carrying on their business on a part-time basis after finishing their factory shifts. They intended to return to self-employment on a full-time basis once they had accumulated further savings from their wages.

By contrast, a far greater proportion of women workers than men had been previously employed in non-manual/clerical work and very few had been recruited from the ‘non-formal’ sector. On the face of it, this was surprising given the large numbers of Yoruba women, including those with education, who derive their income from petty trade, seamstressing and so on. However, the explanation lay in most cases in the non-married status of most women employees. Women usually obtain the capital for trading or for establishing themselves as self-employed artisans from their husbands. Unable yet to secure themselves in such enterprises, at least at a level which would provide an income comparable to even low wage employment, such employment was preferable. The conditions of work in the factory were certainly preferable to being an irregularly paid uncertificated teacher.

Women’s Work in the Odu’Atex Factory
A textile factory, even a relatively small one like this, offers a wide range of jobs, many of which, being low paid and classified as unskilled, are commonly done by women in many industrial and industrialising countries. Given that in this particular factory, women had relatively high levels of education in comparison to other Nigerian factory workers, one might have expected to find them employed in larger numbers and on a variety of processes. This was not the case. Apart from cleaners and clerical workers, almost all the women shop floor workers were employed in the doffering department. This is the place in which the cotton
thread is prepared for the looms and the relevant colours for each pattern are laid down. It is repetitive work, not very arduous as it can be done sitting down. In the Odu'Atex Factory, it was carried on in a room next to the weaving shed in which the women sat around in groups, working and talking as much as the supervisors would allow. The basic requirement was that during the morning and afternoon shift the women should have laid out enough thread to last the weavers for both these shifts and the night shift as women did not work on the night shift.

The manner in which the Odu'Atex Factory management had defined and segregated women's work appears to have derived from a combination of factors characteristic of the discrimination facing women seeking industrial work in Nigeria as a whole and of the particular circumstances of this factory. As we have explained above, in Nigeria it was and is accepted that women should have income earning opportunities even if these are not to exceed or compete with those of men. As a publicly financed factory, management had to accept that it should employ women. Indeed, its publicity usually advertised its public spiritedness in this respect and a female quota of jobs had been established. But, in fact, management had set aside an essential but repetitive, low paid job with little prospect of promotion as 'suitable' for its women employees. From whatever source, management had acquired a stereotype of women workers which it proceeded to realise and reinforce. It provided the kind of work which did not require much concentration and which was unlikely to provoke high levels of interest amongst workers. There was, indeed, a certain contradiction between the work offered and the educational standards of the women recruited who were certainly capable of more taxing work. Management appeared to be hoping to avoid the risk of having to provide maternity benefits and leave for the young female labour force that it had employed by guaranteeing that its women workers would not acquire any commitment to industrial labour or promotion within the plant. However, given that the factory at this particular time was scarcely being run as a profit-making venture, one should not over-exaggerate the purely 'economic' motives for segregating women employees into this particular job.

The women workers appeared to be satisfied with their jobs. Wages were paid regularly, it was not too tiring and it enabled them to talk to their friends throughout the day. Like most industrial workers in Nigeria, women did not suppose that they would stay long in the factory. They intended at least to accumulate part of their wages to set up in business on their own. Their plans, similar to those of male industrial workers, reflected their knowledge of a vigorous informal sector with considerable opportunities for those with resources. Wage employment potentially offered women a source of income for establishing an enterprise independently of the husband usually required to provide the initial loan for entering trade or business. However, a comparison of the place occupied by factory work in the projected life careers of female and male workers at this factory showed significant differences in the advantages it offered to women and men.

Male workers operated with a 'model career' in mind to which most strove to conform. The most desirable of these 'careers' ran like this. A self-employed artisan, such as a mechanic or an electrician, did not have enough capital or experience to make a satisfactory living. He was working in his own small town in Ekiti where incomes, and therefore demand for products and services, were low and competition between under-capitalised artisans severe. He took a job at
Odu’Atex, starting as a weaver but using his job as a step to becoming a mechanic or electrician in the factory. These jobs were highly sought after. They were relatively well paid and they involved moving around from one department to another without much supervision so that the work could be done at the individual’s pace. Not only were the conditions of such work more congenial than those of other jobs in the factory, but the worker was acquiring valuable experience and was able to work on a part-time basis on his own account outside factory hours. He hoped that, after a number of years, he would be able to accumulate sufficient capital to establish himself as a prosperous, independent artisan. Such a perception of industrial labour differs from that of the Nigerian male worker in general only insofar as the Odu’Atex worker planned to become an independent craftsman rather than a trader. This was a more realistic ambition in Ado where commercial opportunities were more limited and capital more scarce than in, for example, Lagos.

For women workers, on the other hand, despite similar ambitions there was no equivalent ‘model career’ to which they could strive to conform. The majority had been low-grade clerical workers, uncertificated teachers or ward assistants in hospitals. Their skills acquired in such employment offered relatively few advantages in trade or small businesses. Moreover, they could not go back to these jobs since, as a result of expanding educational opportunities, they had become increasingly vulnerable to better educated applicants. The skills required for the artisan and business enterprises open to women were not in demand, and were certainly not acquired, in the factory. Even the skills of those who had been hand-loom weavers were manifestly not being utilised in the work they were doing at Odu’Atex.

The repetitive and relatively unskilled work done by most women workers was not seen by management or women themselves as a step towards more skilled jobs. The only advantage it had over their previous employment was its relative security and the lack of hard physical labour which had been the conditions of their previous employment or of the types of non-capitalised petty trading which were otherwise open to them. Women did carry on other occupations in their spare time but these had no relationship to the work they did in the factory. They engaged in the marginal trading activity carried on by many Yoruba women, hoping to accumulate enough capital to break into a more profitable line. Their experience at Odu’Atex could not be perceived, and was not so perceived by the women themselves, as providing experience which would enable them directly to broaden their opportunities in trade or business. Insofar as it provided a wage, it did offer possibilities of accumulating savings for investment. But even this was an opportunity more available to men than to women. Women were not to be promoted to better paid work. Should eventually they marry and/or have children, even if management did not get rid of them, they were well aware of the increasing difficulty in Nigeria of finding an adequate means of caring for small children while in factory employment. Women, therefore, were less likely to be able to continue in wage employment as long as they might need, or return to it when they need, as men at least anticipated that they should be able to do. Women were less likely, therefore, to be able to use wage employment in this factory as a means of accumulating or restoring resources and skills for self-employment. They eventually enter or re-enter such enterprises not so much because they have attained sufficient resources to make a viable living out of them, but as a way of combining child care with their financial obligations.
Thus, although male and female workers at this factory had similar qualifications and very similar ambitions, they were incorporated into industrial labour on different terms. The work done by the most skilled men workers, and to which most unskilled male workers could at least aspire, offered relevant experience and the possibilities of earnings which might allow them to end up as independent craftsmen with a higher income than before starting work at Odu’Atex. Women were disadvantaged in all these respects. The men workers may be divided into those skilled workers for whom factory employment could be incorporated as a stage in their model careers and those unskilled workers for whom this was less likely. The women workers all fell into the unskilled category and were, on the whole, aware of their disadvantages.

Conclusion
A very small proportion of the Nigerian labour force works in industry at the present time (10 per cent) but the industrial sector is growing and is subject to considerable effort to attract foreign and indigenous private and public investment. So far most enterprises are established by a combination of foreign private investment and Nigerian public capital in which the foreign partners who are usually also the technical partners have control over the organisation of the work place.

The prevailing ideology in Nigeria allows that women have the right to work for wages outside the home, although priority is placed on providing wage earning employment for men. The recognition of the need to provide such employment for women is greater in the public sector than in private commercial enterprises. In the instance of a factory heavily dependent on public sector financing, the Odu’Atex Factory, this has led to the reservation of a limited number of jobs for women in jobs arbitrarily defined as women’s work. The prevailing tendency for Nigerian industrial workers is to look forward to a prosperous future as traders or independent craft workers. The nature of the employment provided at Odu’Atex offers women a far lesser opportunity for so doing than men. Thus, the factory not only marginalised women as industrial employees but furthered their disadvantages in the increasingly capitalised non-formal sector to which most such women must resort in order to maintain their financial and domestic obligations for the caring and rearing of children. Such jobs in no way threatened gender inequality in Nigeria.

Thus, although the process of industrialisation in Nigeria has not yet incorporated women as an important source of cheap labour as it has elsewhere in the Third World, it is nevertheless in the process of reproducing and reinforcing gender subordination.

Bibliographic Note
A British journalist, interviewing a member of SWAPO Women’s Council (SWC), wrote last year:

In a little over 10 years the Council has reshaped the lives of these (Namibian) women (refugees) creating the structure of a society which would be the envy of many Western feminists. Kindergartens and nurseries run in shifts providing childcare from 8am to 5pm, to let the mothers study and not be bound by their children.

In October last year, Frieda Williams, a member of SWC, described the progress made since the Council’s first congress in 1980. It has eradicated 35 per cent of illiteracy among the 70,000 people in the Namibian settlements in Angola (where the illiteracy rate among women was as high as 90 per cent); trained 250 women drivers and 25 women mechanics, made dozens of men and women skilled producers of woven rugs and knitted and sewn garments for use by refugees; run successful typing courses and seminars on women’s oppression and the role of women within the national liberation struggle. Concerns conventionally deemed the prerogative of women — childcare, health education and care, family planning etc. — have been tackled by SWC as issues for the society as a whole, resulting in achievements such as 24-hour creches and a commitment by SWAPO to positive discrimination in favour of women’s access to education and training.

The aims and objectives of the Women’s Council, as defined in its constitution, include consolidating these gains in a future independent Namibia: ‘To bring about women’s full participation in the productive work, in public administration, in education and the cultural creativity of our society . . . to campaign for the creation of sufficient nursery schools and day boarding schools in a liberated Namibia so as to facilitate women’s full participation . . .’ and ‘mobilising women for effective participation in the current struggle for national liberation’. Namibian women have no illusions that the advances won so far will ensure the fulfilment of these objectives:

SWAPO women’s participation in the armed struggle is not a guarantee of their emancipation. Of course it has changed men’s attitudes, but we have learnt from other countries which gained their independence recently that despite women’s involvement in the national liberation struggle they have often been denied participation in the government which they fought for. We don’t want to repeat these mistakes . . .

But Namibian women know they have everything to gain from the ousting of the South African regime, which has imposed on them a system the brutality of whose effects upon women are almost unparalleled.
The oppression experienced by women in the intensely privatised domestic labour forced upon them by apartheid; the isolation and deprivation of their role as full-time mothers, full-time agricultural workers and builders and maintainers of homes in the Bantustans (where nearly 70 per cent of black Namibian women live) has been well documented. In their own words:

Netumbo Nandi: Since colonialism, the participation of men in cultivation has decreased substantially. The African men were rapidly creamed off the rural areas to work as cheap labourers in the colonialists' mining, fishing and ranching industries. Therefore under colonialism, the Namibian rural women have even harder times than before... Husbands are not allowed to take their families along to places of employment. Thus, women must always remain working in the fields, as well as looking after their children at home and the overall household, while husbands and older boys are gone for very long spells — 12 to 18 months — on contract in the so-called 'white areas'. The men's wages are so meagre that the drudgery of women's work is hardly ever alleviated by such incomes... More and more women were drawn into the domestic service working for mere subsistence wages... Whereas it was possible for the men who worked in the mining, construction and fishing areas for many years to become at least semi-skilled workers, it has been virtually impossible for women working in the domestic service to acquire any productive skills. The situation has not fundamentally changed since the days of German colonialism...

Mathilda Nanyemba: When the men are away for a year or more on contract the wives and daughters have to assume so many responsibilities without the cheering help of their mature sons, husbands and cousins. For example, there is a severe shortage of clinics and hospitals in the rural areas. Malaria is always endemic in these areas, especially during the wet, rainy seasons. Although the rainy season is when people should spend much time cultivating their fields, more often than not you find women flocking with their children on their backs to far distant clinics in search of scarce medical services.

The unpaid productive work which black Namibian women, like thousands of black women in South Africa perform, is an integral part of the economy of apartheid, facilitating their own poverty-line survival and that of those children who survive the drastic infant mortality rate of 163 per 1,000. Male contract and migrant workers are paid wages which seldom stretch to supporting their families in the Bantustans.

There are a few black Namibian women in paid employment — roughly 73,000 compared with a male waged labour population of 172,000. Like their sisters in South Africa, they are discriminated against in the labour market. Almost the only jobs open to them are in agriculture, fish canning and teaching (for those lucky enough to have sufficient education even by the low standards of the racist system), nursing, and as domestic servants for whites. For Namibian women in the labour force, accommodation is hard to find — compounds built to house mining and industrial labour are restricted to men. Although the pass laws as they apply in South Africa were formally lifted in 1977, restrictions on movements for blacks in so-called white areas have not changed, and systems of control involving identification cards are stringently applied. In all jobs black Namibian women earn a fraction of the meagre wages of their male counterparts, sometimes less than a third. A recent report from Namibia revealed that women domestic workers earn R20-R40 per month.

Work as domestic servants for whites is particularly alienating. As one woman put it:

We as housewives must leave our children at home during the day because there are no
centres to look after our children. We have to get out and go and look for work; and if we get work we have to start work early. We have no-one to look after children and yet we are supposed to remain content. We work for the white housewife — we have to look after her children, while we have to leave our children at home . . . When we come home we don’t know whether they have been at school, because they don’t have a law which forces children to school. Most of the time children go to dirt bins to scratch for food.

Another said,

The missus smokes one cigarette after another, and I follow her all over the house . . . to remove the ashes. And the boss fondles my breasts . . .

These factors in Namibian women’s oppression are often dealt with in analyses of the effects of apartheid. As a particularly vicious brand of capitalism, apartheid took over and used for its own ends the previously established sexual division of labour. In pre-colonial society, the domination of Namibian women was based on the sexual division of labour that arose in the circumstances of stock-raising, hunting and agricultural societies prior to the 19th century. In the traditional societies, where co-operation and sharing were the norm, women did have a degree of control over the things they produced. Their rights within the family were also protected where necessary by the intervention of relatives. The coming of capitalism and apartheid transformed patriarchal domination into the crushing oppression women experience today.

What is peculiar to Namibian women’s situation is the intensity of the war in which their country is convulsed. 100,000 armed men controlled by Pretoria terrorize Namibia’s 1.5 million people. The war exacerbates the hardships of life under apartheid. It defines the terms of the people’s resistance and shapes their preoccupations.

Inside Namibia, life for civilians is a nightmare. Women and children make up two-thirds of the country’s black population, 80 per cent of women are living under martial law. Particularly in the northern areas near the Kavango river, and in the most intensely populated zone, the Bantustan the regime calls Ovamboland, women are daily subject to rape and atrocities. Systematic campaigns of terror have been well documented by church sources and occasional foreign visitors. The stories of a young woman blindfolded, subjected to electric shock torture and repeatedly raped by South African soldiers for denying knowledge of the whereabouts of SWAPO combatants in 1981; of massacres by South African terror squads of civilians at Oshikuku, Oonghoodi and Omasaka, are all too common.

In June 1983, following the rape of a 62-year-old woman by four South West Africa Territory Forces soldiers, a South African advocate admitted that rape charges were increasingly prevalent, accounting for 42 per cent of cases in the Supreme Court. Yet only a fraction of cases of rape by the South African military are brought to court: most people fear reprisals, and justice is simply not seen to be done. In 1980, a 20-year-old South African soldier raped an 80-year-old woman, Ms Kasiky, who had to be hospitalised for profuse bleeding. The soldier pleaded innocence on the grounds that she had consented, but after his acquittal told a court reporter that he had lied to escape punishment.

The war also takes it toll in other, less obvious ways — army take-overs of schools and hospitals, and the destruction of the few social services available to black Namibians run by missionaries. Forced removal of civilians from areas they have
cultivated, the burning and destruction of crops, South African army interference with water supplies, worsen the suffering inflicted by one of the worst droughts in southern African history. The recent bubonic plague epidemic, which has involved 460 reported cases in less than a year, has been attributed by newspapers in Namibia and South Africa to the effects of the war on environmental health. Military activities have given rise to squatter camps around Oshakati and Ondangwa, housing over 6,000 people, where conditions are desperately unsanitary.

The ferocity of South Africa's campaign of repression and violence in Namibia is indicative of the real threat organised popular resistance poses. The regime has inflicted a network of 'security legislation', effectively outlawing SWAPO meetings and allowing the police and military such powers of arrest, detention and immunity from prosecution for arbitrary violence against civilians that they are virtually a law unto themselves. Restrictions on workplace and trade union organisation are more severe than those in South Africa itself — hence the comparative absence in Namibia today of strikes and trade union struggles. Despite this, women workers organised against a fish processing factory last December, half the firm's 150 woman workers going on strike over holiday pay, and won their claims. Women's role in resistance in Namibia has a long and proud history. Its highlights include women's leadership of the 1959 protests against forced removals from Windhoek to the Katutura township (Namibia's Sharpeville); their support through boycotts of services for the 1971/2 national strike; and the role of activists such as Lucia Hamutenya in keeping SWAPO's organisation alive during one of the most severe clamp-downs in 1978. Namibian women like Nahambo Shamena describe their own experiences of sheltering SWAPO combatants, hiding guns in baby clothes, and international campaigns against arrest and detention in the territory. Netumbo Nandi, now SWAPO's representative in East Africa, explained how women became more vocal in SWAPO's political mobilisation during the 1940s:

In the early stages of SWAPO, the participation of women was small, due to the lingerings of semi-feudal mentality and structure in the country . . . The Windhoek uprising (1959) represents an important point of departure for our national liberation struggle. It marked the shift from the policies of petitioning the UN to that of mass agitation. In short, I can say that women were slower than men to get involved in the early years, but they were not very much behind the men as they too felt the oppression as much as the men . . . In the 1970s women began to take a very active part in organising meetings and rallies. We began to see that when SWAPO Youth activists held meetings and demonstrations against colonialism, women were sometimes in the majority. Some of the men began to rethink their traditional prejudices against women as a good number of women began to be vocal at meetings. Colonial jails began to be filled with not only men, but also women. When the South African government ordered mass public floggings in 1973, nearly half the victims were women . . . Thousands of Namibians decided to enlist in the People's Liberation Army of Nambia; a considerable number are women. Today you will find women at every level of our movement's structure. But whatever has been achieved so far must be seen not only as a victory against the existing social and economic structure which discriminates against women in employment and education, but also as a victory against the prejudices of some of our male comrades.

Women, like men, have been victimised for their SWAPO activities. Gertrude Kandanga, Deputy Secretary of SWAPO Women's Council inside Namibia, was detained without trial for over a year, arrested when she was due to attend the SWC Congress in Angola. Subsequently released, she has been held under house
arrest for over two years. Ida Jimmy, the only sentenced woman prisoner (thousands are held in detention) was arrested and sentenced to seven years imprisonment for addressing a SWAPO meeting in 1980. A SWAPO activist, she was sacked for her political activities from her job in Luderitz. At the rally, she spoke out against the South African Defence Force and urged people to give shelter and food to SWAPO guerrillas, stressing that they were the sons and daughters of the Namibian people. Seven months pregnant at the time of her trial, she gave birth to a son, Richard, in prison. After a year, the baby was handed over to his grandmother, who took care of him until he took ill and died in June 1983. Ida was refused permission even to attend his funeral.

The participation of women in SWAPO's armed struggle has expanded with the use of modern equipment and technology. While women combatants are still in the minority, there are many female commanders. Training is undergone jointly by both men and women. Among Namibians who have died in combat and are honoured for their bravery are two women who died attempting to defend the Kassinga refugee settlement during South Africa's 1978 massacre, with anti-aircraft guns in their hands. Women continue to play a major role as carriers, walking for days into the combat zones in Namibia, bearing supplies of arms and food for the freedom fighters.

As successive obstacles are placed in the way of implementation of the United Nations independence plan for Namibia, Resolution 435 (1978), the validity of SWAPO's insistence on the armed struggle as the only effective means of exerting pressure on the regime becomes increasingly apparent. As the independence negotiations drag on, SWAPO faces the prospect of a long and bloody war. In accordance with the internationalism which has characterised the Namibian struggle, SWAPO continues to appeal for support abroad, particularly amongst sympathisers in those countries renowned for their collaboration with South Africa. Item 7 of the aims and objectives of the SWAPO Women's Council reads:

To develop an internationalist spirit in the Namibian woman by enabling her to work in solidarity with all militant and progressive feminine movements, thereby strengthening the worldwide anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist front.

In response to the demands of SWAPO Women, the British-based SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign was formed in 1975. Since then it has been working among women in Britain to raise understanding of the nature of Namibian women's oppression under South African occupation and of their role in the struggle for national liberation. It also concentrates on Britain's collaboration with the illegal occupation of Namibia and Britain's implicit role in reinforcing the oppression of Namibian women. It has been appealing for contributions of sanitary towels, underwear, and material support for the Council's literacy campaigns, believing that to pursue their struggle effectively Namibian women need to be free from a constant preoccupation with daily physical survival. The group has also tried to spread information about the work of SWAPO Women's Council internationally. For further information on campaigns for material aid for SWAPO Women's Council, Namibian women political prisoners, literacy and on the links between Namibia and Britain, contact SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign at 53 Leverton Street, London NW5, UK. Tel: (01) 267-1941.

Anne Murray-Hudson
SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign
Bibliographic Note

Further Reading
Namibian Women's Struggle and Solidarity in Britain, produced jointly by SWAPO Women's Council and SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign, London, 1981.
*Namibia Today*, official organ of SWAPO of Namibia, published by SWAPO Department of Information and Publicity, Luanda, People's Republic of Angola.

ANGOLAN WOMEN'S CONGRESS

*Unity, Organisation, Development*. This was the theme of the First Congress of the Organisation of Angolan Women (OMA), held in Luanda from 2 to 8 March 1983. A Congress of unity it certainly was, bringing together 365 women delegates representing every province of Angola and a wide spectrum of Angolan society — peasants, workers, intellectuals, professionals. There was also a large number of foreign delegations, from every continent, who brought messages of solidarity to their Angolan sisters. Organisationally the Congress was a remarkable success and included also social and cultural events and visits to creches and other places of special interest. But perhaps most crucial to the Congress was the question of development. Time and again it was emphasised that the emancipation of women was a prerequisite for national development and, at the same time, that it was only through their engagement in national reconstruction that women could achieve true emancipation.

Intensive preparatory work had preceded the holding of the Congress. During meetings at local and provincial level, women had analysed and debated essential questions related to their lives, and had also elected their delegations to the Congress. Important documents had been prepared — filled with a wealth of historical, economic, social and other information — under headings which were to be the titles of the working commissions of the Congress: the emancipation of women, working women, women and the family, and the revision of the OMA statutes.

Mobilised by OMA, women played a vital role in the liberation struggle, taking
Bibliographic Note

Further Reading
Namibian Women's Struggle and Solidarity in Britain, produced jointly by SWAPO Women's Council and SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign, London, 1981.
Namibia Today, official organ of SWAPO of Namibia, published by SWAPO Department of Information and Publicity, Luanda, People's Republic of Angola.

ANGOLAN WOMEN'S CONGRESS

Unity, Organisation, Development. This was the theme of the First Congress of the Organisation of Angolan Women (OMA), held in Luanda from 2 to 8 March 1983. A Congress of unity it certainly was, bringing together 365 women delegates representing every province of Angola and a wide spectrum of Angolan society — peasants, workers, intellectuals, professionals. There was also a large number of foreign delegations, from every continent, who brought messages of solidarity to their Angolan sisters. Organisationally the Congress was a remarkable success and included also social and cultural events and visits to creches and other places of special interest. But perhaps most crucial to the Congress was the question of development. Time and again it was emphasised that the emancipation of women was a prerequisite for national development and, at the same time, that it was only through their engagement in national reconstruction that women could achieve true emancipation.

Intensive preparatory work had preceded the holding of the Congress. During meetings at local and provincial level, women had analysed and debated essential questions related to their lives, and had also elected their delegations to the Congress. Important documents had been prepared — filled with a wealth of historical, economic, social and other information — under headings which were to be the titles of the working commissions of the Congress: the emancipation of women, working women, women and the family, and the revision of the OMA statutes.

Mobilised by OMA, women played a vital role in the liberation struggle, taking
part in combat and working as doctors, nurses, radio operators, to name but a few of their fields of participation. As a result of its work in literacy teaching, in 1971 OMA was awarded UNESCO's Nadejda Krupskaya Literacy Award, an honour usually accorded to countries, not to a woman's organisation engaged in a national liberation struggle. Socially speaking, OMA registered a number of achievements during the liberation war; and it is an interesting fact that bride-price was abolished in the liberated and guerrilla areas.

After independence in 1975, OMA was faced with very new tasks. It continued to have the backing of the MPLA, dedicated to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and to the emancipation of women. But the society it was now working within was far more complex than that of the guerrilla areas, involving also a whole range of activities which women who had worked clandestinely in the colonialist-held areas had not had to deal with. There were anachronistic laws inherited from the colonial past which remained in force until such time as they were replaced by new laws. New laws could not be blindly copied from those of other countries and needed the lived experience of the new Angolan society to determined what much of their content would be.

Not only laws were inherited, but conservative attitudes which stemmed both from a colonial heritage in which the Catholic Church and the fascist Portuguese state had formed a close alliance, and from traditional Angolan society.

Starting from the basic premise that the full emancipation of society is impossible without the emancipation of women, it was necessary not only to persuade men to respect the equality of women, both at work and in the home, but to persuade many women themselves of the need to further their education and come out of the home to take part in the mammoth tasks of rebuilding a country devastated by two national liberation wars and continued aggression by racist South Africa and its Angolan hirelings. Changing the role and living conditions of peasant women was a vital need.

During the first years of independence, in addition to mobilising women and building up a remarkably big membership, OMA’s main activity was in support of different government programmes, playing a vital role in the vaccination and literacy campaigns, for example, and making its presence felt wherever problems of women and children needed solution, particularly as regards war widows and orphans, displaced persons and other victims of the country’s bellicose enemies.

During those years there were numerous conferences, meetings and all kinds of discussions on the specific problems of women and their organisation, so that by the time work started on organising OMA’s First Congress in 1982, the organisation had a rich fund of experience and serious study to draw upon. Meetings of working mothers held in many of the country’s provinces provided substantial information on this important sector of the working population. In every province meetings were held at local and provincial level to discuss women’s problems and to elect delegates to the Congress, so that when the Congress met in Luanda in March it was attended by 365 delegates representing every province in the country. Only in the case of Cunene Province, occupied by South Africa’s armed forces since August 1981, had OMA members from there had to hold their preparatory meetings in Huila Province to the north.

The Congress for the first time tackled officially problems specific to women in society, some of them requiring new legislation to replace anachronistic
Portuguese laws still in force.

In his opening speech, President José Eduardo dos Santos stressed that women were ‘the most oppressed and exploited during the colonial period, if we consider that they were subjected not only to colonial domination but also to their husband’s authority’, adding that they still had to demand that their independence be respected ‘by many compatriots with a conservative and selfish mentality’. ‘It is not an easy struggle, and not only a struggle for women.’ the President said, ‘It is the struggle of all progressive people in our society.’ He praised the courage and maturity of OMA for having raised sensitive questions and stated that the views of the Congress would be decisive to the drawing up and adoption of new legislation to protect women’s interests.

In her report to the Congress, OMA’s National Co-ordinator, Ruth Neto — who was subsequently elected Secretary-General of OMA — traced the long history of the organisation since it was founded, summing up the tasks achieved since independence and those still lying ahead. The problems faced by Angolan women today, she stressed, stemmed from the prevailing situation in the country, which was underdeveloped and daily attacked by South Africa and its protégés. ‘OMA and all Angolan women,’ she said, ‘must be united and organised for the struggle for peace and development against the racist South Africans and their Angolan puppets, the lackeys of imperialism, because we know that without peace and development we shall never achieve the total emancipation of women in our country’. She added, however: ‘There are other problems women experience in their day-to-day lives which are a result not of external factors but of objective and subjective internal factors. It is up to us to give impetus to their solution because we experience and feel them more intensely. And it is in this sphere that our organisation must make its greatest efforts, so that women can involve themselves and participate ever more actively in all aspects of national life and fully exercise their rights.’

After several days of debate during which there was a remarkable degree of unanimity, particularly if we consider that among the delegates there were both illiterate women and university graduates, the resolutions adopted were read at a plenary session. They stressed the need for profound changes in social, political and economic structures to achieve women’s equality in every sphere. The condition of peasant women — those most exploited and benefiting least from social change — was emphasised. They need to be encouraged to engage increasingly in co-operative work, so as to gain more from the literacy campaigns, education and health and technological change. Raising the educational level of all women was essential to their advancement. Regarding housework, the Congress stated that the domestic economy was an essential part of the national economy which was often understated, resulting in discrimination against women. It considered that women should engage in national defence and encourage their children to do so.

On the question of women and the family, the OMA Congress called for new legislation to enshrine the equality of men and women, defend the interests of children and create a new family morality, as well as services to inform and guide women regarding their rights. The state, it said, should ensure the greater protection and equality of children, whether or not born in wedlock, and there should be allowances for children born out of wedlock to be directly deducted from the father’s pay. Special courts should be set up to deal with problems of the
family and of minors, and new legislation was required on questions of paternity. Legal and social measures should be introduced to protect unmarried mothers, who should receive family allowances. The legal rights of women living with men to whom they were not married should be protected. All young women should be able to study with a view to achieving qualifications ensuring their economic independence, and the Party, OMA and the Party Youth should organise meetings to discuss such matters as dating, marriage and sex.

Conditions should be created to ensure the right of women to freely-consented motherhood. This required facilities for sex education, especially in schools, and publicity on family planning and contraception. Young girls who became pregnant should not be forced to marry against their will or against the will of the boy concerned. Traditional ideas about women’s fertility were to be fought against and a family planning programme introduced as one of the ways of reducing infant mortality. As a last resort, in the case of unwanted pregnancy, abortion should be authorised. There should also be frank discussions on prostitution, especially in schools. Meeting, talks and seminars should be held to ensure constant education for adults on the new relations in the family and society. There should be no discriminatory attitudes or measures in state organisations, and women should cease to have to obtain their husbands’ permission before travelling on official business, while it should be compulsory to have also the mother’s permission before children travelled abroad.

On working women, the Congress said that the equality of men and women at work laid down by the law should be put into practice. The right of working women to motherhood should be protected, as well as their access to further training. Special attention should be given to working women in rural areas, ensuring that they can study and hold responsible and decision-making posts. Employers should ensure that pregnant women do not carry out tasks which could harm the health of mother and child. OMA further stressed the need to train more personnel for mother and child care centres and called for a review of shop opening hours to facilitate purchases by working mothers, as well as the establishment of consumer co-operatives at workplaces. Another measure called for was the establishment of automatic laundries, as well as canteens in schools and at workplaces.

For the rural areas, minimal ways of alleviating the work of peasant women would be to drill fresh water wells, open collective laundries and promote the production of local domestic articles.

Traditional midwives should continue to be recruited and organised, while more creches and kindergartens should be opened at workplaces, in neighbourhoods and agricultural co-operatives. Meanwhile, more sports, recreational and cultural activities for children should be organised.

Functional literacy should be given priority in rural areas, recruiting women from those areas to work as literacy teachers and providing them with incentives to ensure women’s involvement in socially useful work.

Article 158 of the General Labour Law provides for three months’ maternity leave. The Congress, noting that there had been irregularities, called on women not to abuse this law to the detriment of national reconstruction requirements.

Finally, women were called upon to be exemplary in their fulfilment of the tasks
and targets of the country’s General Emergency Plan and programmes, the economic priority and austerity plan for this period of increased South African aggression and falling world commodity prices.

In his closing speech, Lucio Lara, Central Committee Secretary for Organisation, emphasised the importance of the Congress, ‘representing more than a million OMA members’ and said that ‘the Party and the State are now in possession of valuable elements which will make it possible to programme action to solve many of the problems that face our women both in the countryside and in the towns, and which will help to establish more just conditions in our society. The correction of some anachronistic laws and combating certain phenomena which affect young women, working mothers, women in the home, pregnant women and children have now become immediate courses of action for Party and Government organs.’

The final event of the OMA Congress was a gigantic peace march on 8 March, International Women’s Day. The march started at the newly-named Square of the Heroines. Inaugurated on 2 March, Angolan Women’s Day, the square honours the memory of five founder members of OMA, Deolinda Rodrigues, Lucrecia Paim, Irene Cohen, Engracia dos Santos and Teresa Afonso, who on 2 March 1967 — while on an important mission in the MPLA’s first military region in northern Angola — were captured by Holden Roberto’s FNLA and subsequently murdered in the notorious Kinkuzu camp in Zaire.

Under the main cry of ‘Women demand peace’, delegates, guests, Party and Government leaders and a large part of the population of Luanda marched through the streets of Luanda to the Cidadela, a vast covered sports stadium. There were speeches there by Dino Matross, a member of the Political Bureau and Minister of State Security, and a number of the foreign guests. This was followed by an impressive display of dancing and gymnastics, brightly hued clothes and flags making a blaze of colour against a backdrop of ever-changing coloured panels held by students, forming vivid patterns and images. It was a fitting end to a crucially important national event which, from start to finish, had been a perfect illustration of the theme ‘Unity, Organisation, Development’.

Only days after the Congress ended its proceedings, a new Angolan Family Law had reached the final draft, awaiting approval by the Central Committee and the People’s Assembly prior to promulgation.

Marga Holness
THE STATE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE SUDAN

The proliferation on a world scale of studies on women and women-related issues has been one of the features of social science during the decades of the '70s and '80s. This trend can be related to two developments. The first is the rise and spread of a politically active feminist movement, especially in Western Europe and the United States. The second is the declaration by the United Nations of the 'Women's Decade' (1975-85). Besides encouraging the availability of funds for researching women's issues, these two developments have also resulted in the questioning of the adequacy and viability of conventional approaches of social science to the study of women.

Before turning to women's studies in the Sudan, it may be useful to cast a critical eye on the current 'fashion' of women's studies. Marcia Westkott has drawn an important distinction between social science about women and social science for women. The former, she says, has begun from the premise that because of their past exclusion as objects of knowledge, women are an attractive subject to exploit. This type of social science is dedicated simply to the recording of present or past conditions of women. Its effect, according to Westkott is essentially to justify the status quo. In contrast, a social science for women informs the knowledge it seeks with an intention for the future rather than a resignation to the present. Westkott concludes that:

The difference between a social science about women and a social science for women, between the possibilities of self-exploitation and those of liberation, is our imaginative capacity to imbue our understanding of the world with a commitment to overcoming the subordination and devaluation of women.

Bearing this distinction in mind, the present paper emphasises the necessity of formulating a social science for women. Such a call, however, should not be confused with support for the ideological notion of a 'segregated' social science exclusively for women. Neither does it imply that studies of women must be carried out by female researchers only. Rather, it maintains that research for women should be put at the service of women, thus allowing not only their re-entry into the realm of scientific knowledge, but also fundamentally addressing issues of praxis and the possibility that research may assist women in changing their life situations. We present a critical review of studies on Sudanese women, assessing their current status, underlying assumptions, theoretical bases and methodological orientations before making some suggestions for research within a specific theoretical framework.

The Neglect of Women by Research
That knowledge is socially produced is a premise on which social scientists adopting an anti-positivistic stance would generally agree. Such a premise rests on the affirmation that what comes to constitute knowledge in a society is related to the social consciousness of groups differentially situated within it. A corollary to this position is that certain aspects of social reality, being outside that social consciousness, do not come to constitute knowledge. As a case in point, women and women-related issues have seldom been given their deserved research attention and when studied have been dealt with in a cursory and superficial manner that neglects some of their fundamental dimensions.

The neglect of these issues, when recognised, has been rationalised by the
argument that they are of secondary importance in a country like Sudan, whose basic concern for the past 25 years has been the pursuit of that illusory aim: 'development'. Thus research has been focused on such matters as economic development, economic growth, technological advance, etc. Studies related to women have been accorded the status of less important knowledge because it has been assumed that they are not crucial to the generation of 'development'.

This rationale is related to two further points. The first is that a serious and true scientific analysis of women-related issues would inevitably lead to investigation of other crucial but 'touchy' issues that many would prefer to remain untackled or left within the realm of commonsense-knowledge. The most important among these is the subject of social class, along with related exploitative behaviours and practices and means of rationalising and/or masking these practises. The roles of the extended family and Islam as sources for such rationalisation are themselves too readily subject to neglect.

The rationale for giving minimal research attention to women is related to another point. This is an image of development as a basically technical process to be achieved by planning from above and to involve the building of more factories, the setting up of more ambitious development schemes and the like. Seldom is development seen as a process fundamentally relating to the behaviours and lives of men and women in society and oriented toward improvement of the position of the under-privileged among them.

Such views tend to overlook the fact that women play crucial roles in production, especially in agricultural areas. In Africa, for instance, it is estimated that women undertake about 60 per cent of agricultural work in addition to carrying out the domestic chores of cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water, child care, etc. Despite this, women in the Third World, are ignored in development planning, their economic contribution is devalued and their positions are primarily viewed in respect of stereotypes relating to their domestic roles.

Conventional studies on the role of women in development have been based on the assumption that there are two economic sectors — one 'traditional' and the other 'modern', the latter being integrated into the national and world markets. Within this perspective the majority of women are relegated to the 'traditional' sector. It is assumed that only through education and training can they be absorbed into the 'modern' sector.

Such views tend to neglect the fact that the 'traditional' and 'modern' economic sectors are interdependent and part of a single whole. Specifically, the so-called traditional sector is maintained in the interest of capitalist enterprise as a source of cheap labour and raw materials and as a market for industrial goods. The historical expansion of the capitalist system has thus come to affect profoundly the household in the Third World and the sexual division of labour within it. Whereas men migrate seeking wage employment, women are left to undertake both local wage employment and subsistence production. At the same time many upper class women are displaced from production and confined to the house.

While this exploitation and subordination of Third World women is essentially economically based, it is enhanced by various social and ideological factors which actively contribute to the reproduction of the system as a whole.
Evaluation of the Current Status of Women's Studies in the Sudan

Having noted how conceptions of development as a technical and economic process related to expansion of the modern sector have led to an under-valuing of the role of women in production and thereby to the inhibiting of research on women-related issues, we now turn toward an evaluation of those relatively few studies on women which have been carried out. A number of points emerge from a review of these studies. One is the general absence of clear theoretical frameworks. Virtually no work to date has even attempted to formulate a theoretical statement on the general position of Sudanese women, whether in an historical or present context. In fact most work is descriptive, ahistorical and lacking even a superficial grounding in theory. Such descriptive work can generally be subdivided into (a) that which purports to discuss the experiences of women in particular cultural groups, e.g. Ian Cunnison, 'The Position of Women Among the Humr' and (b) that which relates to such specific subjects as the political or legal status of women. In relation to the latter, writings have tended to concentrate on legalistic definitions of women's rights, without due concern for the extent to which these rights have been historically upheld in society, or on such specific problems as how court cases are processed, in whose interest, etc. Cases in point are Nagwa Kamal Farid, 'Wad'a al mara'a al-qanuni min nahiyat al-Shari's al-islami' (1979) and Dina Shaykh el-Din 'Wad'a al-mara'a al-Quanuni al-madani fi al-Sudan' (1979).

Secondly, the lack of general works on women has meant that the subordinate position of women, when recognised, is rarely seen as related to the historical and general conditions of underdevelopment characteristic of Sudanese society as a whole. Neither is it common for women's inferior position to be seen in relation to other dimensions of inequality, such as class, region and the rural/urban divide.

Thirdly, there has been a general lack of comparative analysis of women's life styles in pastoral, agricultural and urban societies in different parts of the Sudan. In particular very little has been written about women in the south. Although an important limitation, the sparcity of basic data with which to undertake such a comparative exercise is no excuse for its absence.

In relation to methodology the studies under review can be classified as follows:

a. works typically done by journalists and travellers and based largely on personal impressions and experience rather than empirical research;
b. studies done by anthropologists depending on ethnographies of specific cultural groups;
c. social survey type studies — all too often based on only small samples — on women's attitudes on specific topics or on attitudes of people on women-related topics.

The dependence of most studies on either personal impressions or single methodological techniques raises questions concerning the reliability and validity of data collected. Creative and in-depth analysis would have minimised drawbacks in data collection.

One further characteristic of existing research on women is its fragmented approach to possible ways forward. Almost invariably 'special' programmes are suggested as means of changing the position of women. But even these tend to be merely ameliorative, paying little attention to the fact that the exploitation of women is part of other exploitative processes in society and cannot therefore be
treated separately.

The lack and inadequacy of existing research relating to women can be highlighted by looking at several specific subject areas: the family, female circumcision, women and the economy and the position of Sudanese women in history and under the current regime.

The Family: The few existing studies on the family have tended to do little more than describe family-related customs and ceremonies (see, for example, Sudan Notes and Records, 1922) or touch on demographic aspects of fertility, family planning, etc (see Mona Khalifa, 1979). No analysis exists of the family's specific and changing role in different spheres of life and in different areas of the Sudan. It would appear that this omission is largely a consequence of the prevailing dominant image of the extended family as an institution characterised by essentially co-operative relations, a view related to the image of Sudanese society as being fundamentally equalitarian, classless, etc. Comprehensive studies of the family would be instrumental in changing this image and would show the family's real role in masking both sexual and other forms of exploitation.

Female Circumcision: Female circumcision is a phenomenon which has existed over a long historical period. But only recently has it become an issue of great importance. Over the past three to five years a substantial quantity of literature has appeared on the subject and it has been the focus of a number of seminars and workshops, as well as mass media coverage (including a recent BBC documentary). This upsurge of interest does not in itself demand explanation except when placed within the context of research and writings relating to women and sex in Sudan. In a society where social science research is generally underdeveloped and where research relating to women has been even more so, such an upsurge of interest in an issue which appears to relate exclusively to women, becomes, in itself, a phenomenon worthy of explanation and analysis. In common with work on other areas related to women, however, that on circumcision has generally involved a form of analysis which is one-sided and narrow. Generally writers have approached the subject from an humanistic perspective, concentrating on the adverse medical effects of the practice together with its psychological repercussions at the individual level. Little attention has been given those historical socio-economic and political conditions which lead to its perpetuation or to its symbolic function in maintaining the present subjugated position of women.

Thus, ways of combatting the practice have dwelt primarily on educating the masses on the various negative effects of the practice. In addition, some writers have advocated 'modernising' the practice by general adoption of the less extreme 'Sunna-type' circumcision. Such proposals show a clear lack of realisation that female circumcision is much more than a surgical process with dire medical effects. It rather has to do with the general structure of social relations and relations between men and women in particular. It is only radical changes in these that can result in the disappearance or even reduced occurrence of female circumcision.

In the meantime, far from disappearing, there is evidence that in recent years celebrations surrounding female circumcision have actually been proliferating. Such proliferation is especially characteristic of the upper classes, for whom such celebrations are one more instance of displaying wealth and conspicuous consumption.
Women and the Economy: Work in this area includes a paper by M. Snyder, ‘Women and Development’ (1976). This is primarily an account of women’s activities in rural and urban areas in industrial and agricultural sectors. Its concern is to point to some of the factors constraining the participation of women. Women’s economic roles, however, are discussed without consideration for the larger socio-economic set-up in which they live. Thus, women are seen as a single group without due concern given to differences existing between them, especially as regards social class.

The paper by Fatma Abd al Mahmoud, ‘Dawr al-mar’a al-Sudaniyya fi al-tanmiyya al-iqtisadiyya wal ijtima’iyya (1977) contains an account of women’s economic roles in rural areas. Its analysis is limited by a tendency to employ the classification, criticised earlier, of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ sectors, without due concern to the relations between these sectors, or their impact on the entire social formation and, in particular, on women.

Ali Mohayyad Bannaga’s paper on ‘Women in the Modern Rural Economy’ (1979) is a description of women’s activities in mechanised farming, in rural agro-industry, in rural petty trading and in other ‘modern’ rural economic activities. In particular Bannaga predicts a complete feminisation of labour in rural agro-industries. Despite this, the writer fails to give an evaluation of female as contrasted with male labour, let alone to specify the criteria on which such an evaluation should be based.

The Position of Sudanese Women in History: The position of women has not so far constituted a significant portion of Sudan’s written history. This is clearly not due to the lack of such a history but rather to specific conceptualisations of it adhered to by various (usually male) historiographers.

The condition of women during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the effect of colonial policies upon their lives, their response to those policies, their ultimate participation in the nationalist anti-colonial struggle and subsequent post-colonial struggles are all issues which have been largely absent from documented Sudanese history. A singular exception to this generalisation is the work of Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim, herself a leading figure in the women’s movement.

The Position of Women under the Current Regime: To the extent that research on women in the period after 1969 has occurred, it may be argued that its thrust has often been influenced by political considerations. Work on and by women affiliated with the new women’s organisations under the hegemony of the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) has tended to focus on two related aspects. One is the ‘gains’ of women under the May Regime following from improved labour legislation and related to equality of pay, rights to pensions, etc. These ‘gains’ have received a great deal of media coverage. We should not forget, however, that they relate almost exclusively to the minority of women employed in government, working in factories, etc. Their effect on the majority of rural women engaged in petty production activities typically remains uninvestigated. Were the issue to be looked at more closely, it might well be seen that, far from making gains, the majority of Sudanese women may well be adversely affected by the state’s economic policies taken as a whole. For in aiding the progressive destruction of non-capitalist forms of life, such policies serve to undermine women’s traditional roles without providing any viable alternatives.

A second emphasis of works by those affiliated to the new women’s organisations
under the SSU is on the appointment, for the first time, of women to high
government positions, the allocation of 25 per cent of local councils' membership
to women and the reservation of seats for women in the National People's
Assembly. All of these have been taken by writers sympathetic with the regime
as firm indications of the increased participation and improved status of women.
Such writers, however, have concentrated on the legislation or impressions about
its possible effects, rather than on empirical investigation of actual effects. If we
consider the 25 per cent quota reserved for female membership on local councils,
interesting questions to raise should include: to what extent is this membership
nominal? How much say do women actually have in the running of Councils'
affairs? To what extent are they manipulated by male councillors in voting on
specific issues.

The Basic of a New Research Orientation

Limitations of existing works on Sudanese women suggest the need not just for
more research, but for a new research orientation. Premises informing such an
orientation should include the following:

1. that the position of women can only be adequately studied, understood and
   ultimately changed through recognition of the wider historical contexts in
   which women live;
2. that any analysis should begin at the level of production since it is women's
   role in production which is vital in determining their position at large;
3. that there must be a recognition of the wide differences (e.g. class, regional,
   rural-urban, etc.) existing among women;
4. that family, sexual relationships and certain ideological elements (such as
   religion) must be recognised as crucial in the reproduction of the capitalist
   system in which women exist.

On the basis of such premises priority areas for research on women in Sudan may
be specified; it should be acknowledged, however, that the following suggestions
are by no means exhaustive.

One area crying for attention is the position of women in economy. Research in
this area should begin from the recognition of the relationships between
household activities, petty production and wage employment. Specific studies
might concentrate on the effect on the family — or more specifically on the
position of women — of migration from rural to urban areas or from rural
villages to agricultural schemes. This type of research should concentrate on
areas adjacent to large agricultural schemes in different parts of the country.

A related subject area is the effect of migration to oil rich Arab countries on both
urban and rural families and hence on women. Since legislation in the countries
attracting labour progressively sets restrictions on the migration and settlement
of whole families, the problem for women left behind may be particularly acute.

Studies are also needed on women in industry. Specific issues requiring
investigation include the comparative value of female industrial labour, the roles
women have in trade unions, women's perceptions of their work and the effects
of female factory labour on the family and on women's roles within their families.
Additional work is also needed on the experience of women who work in the
bureaucracy and on the implications of such work for family life.

A second major area where research efforts should be directed is the family
itself. The changing structures and roles of the family and the position of women within this institution need to be investigated. Especially significant for research is the ideological role played by the family in Sudan as regards the masking of social and sexual inequality. Here changing patterns of sex socialisation, factors determining the choice of marriage partners and differential practices characterising the various social classes are all issues calling for research.

Still other suggestions for investigation include social and institutional constraints on what constitutes acceptable or 'legitimate' sexual behaviour. The differential social constraints set for sexual behaviour for men and women should be considered. In this regard the high value placed on female, but not male, virginity cannot be neglected. Outlets for sexual behaviour and class-based practices related to this (specifically prostitution) are another possibility for research.

Conclusions
Despite their centrality to the productive and reproductive process, women have generally been much under-studied in Sudan. Their neglect is a consequence both of false conceptions of development and of a desire to evade investigations of certain issues such as class formation, religion and sexual practices. When research is done on women, it tends to present distorted images which neglect fundamental aspects of women's lives.

With this situation in mind, this paper has called for the development of a qualitatively different social science than that which has prevailed heretofore — one that is specifically for women. Such a social science should be based on an historical materialist approach which not only explores the far-reaching dimensions of issues related to women and their lives, but also explores and addresses the possibilities for change.

El-Wathig Kamier, Zeinab El-Bakri, Idris Salim Samiya El-Ngar

Bibliographic Note
A number of the works generally or specifically under review in this paper were produced for the Symposium on the Changing Status of Sudanese Women, held in Khartoum, February-March 1979. These include: Ali Mohayad Banaga, 'Women in the Modern Rural Economy'; Dina Shaykh al-Din, 'Wad'a all-mar'a all-qanuni al-Madani fi al-Sudan'; Gasim Badri, "The View of Sudanese Gynaecologists, Midwives and College Students on Female Circumcision'; Mahasin Jaylani and Nafisa Mohamed Al-Amin, 'Tatwir al-wad’a alsiyasi il-mar’a al-arabiyya’ and Nagwa Kamal Farid, 'Wad’a all-mar’a al-qanuni min nahiya al-Shari’a all-islamiya’.


---

**The African Review**

**University of Dar es Salaam**

**SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE WOMEN’S QUESTION**

The journal, *The African Review*, has dedicated one issue to the women’s question. The special editors for this issue are inviting scholars and individuals interested to contribute their articles on the women’s question not later than January 1984. While we encourage freedom for the choice of the theme, we insist that the articles should be original and analytical. Preference will be given to articles based on field research as they might contribute more towards greater understanding of the Women’s Question in Third World countries and in Africa in particular (9,000 words).

Copies of articles should be submitted in duplicate to Marjorie Mbilinyi, PO Box 35185, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Marjorie Mbilinyi
Ruth E. Meena
Special Editors
WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Created in response to the interest and enthusiasm generated at the First Annual Women in Nigeria Conference, ‘Women in Nigeria’ was formally launched at the Second Annual Conference in April 1983. The theoretical basis and rationale for ‘Women in Nigeria’, and the aims and objectives of the organisation were specified and enshrined in the ‘Women in Nigeria’ Constitution. The organisation holds that:

The majority of women, like the majority of men, suffer from the exploitative and oppressive character of Nigerian society;

Women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression;

Women, therefore, suffer double oppression and exploitation — as members of subordinate classes and as women.

The aims and objectives are as follows:
The organisation shall engage in research, policy-making, dissemination of information, and action aimed at improving the conditions of women. The organisation shall act:
a. To promote the study of conditions of women in Nigeria, with the aim of combating discriminatory and sexist practices in the family, in the workplace, and in the wider society;
b. To defend the rights of women under the Nigerian Constitution and the United Nations Human Rights Convention;
c. To provide non-sexist alternatives to government and institutional policies;
d. To fight against the harassment and sexual abuse of females in the family and elsewhere;
e. To promote an equitable distribution of domestic work in the family;
f. To provide a forum for women to express themselves;
g. To ensure for women equal access to equal education;
h. To combat sexist stereotypes in literature, the media and educational materials;
i. To provide the means of educating women on relevant issues;
j. To form links and work with other organisations and groups fighting sex and class oppression;
k. To fight for social justice.

Through meetings, conferences, publications and public representations, ‘Women in Nigeria’ attempts to provide the means through which effective strategies and campaigns may be developed and fought in the continuing struggle against gender and class oppression. Women in Nigeria has already been actively involved with a number of issues in which women’s rights or opportunities were infringed, eroded, or altogether absent.

In recognition of the need to make more Nigerians aware of and sensitive to the many manifestations of both gender and class oppression, and to the severe
constraints these impose on the Nigerian masses to the detriment of the society in general, one area given priority is that of the spread of information. The proceedings of the First Annual ‘Women in Nigeria’ Conference are in press and should be available shortly. An editorial committee has been established to prepare for publication the proceedings of the recent conference, which focused on ‘Women and the Family’. A series of pamphlets concerning women’s roles and rights are being planned to be published in the major Nigerian languages and to be widely distributed throughout Nigeria. Arrangements are also in hand to reach Nigerians through the media of television and radio.

Membership in the organisation, which presently includes representation from 15 of the 19 states of the Federation, is open to all women and men in Nigeria who subscribe to the organisation’s aims and objectives. Persons outside Nigeria are invited to subscribe to the Newsletter:* This is published regularly and is the major means of communication between members and a regular source of up-to-date information concerning ‘Women in Nigeria’ and its activities.

Additional information concerning ‘Women in Nigeria’ may be obtained from: The National Executive Committee, PO Box 253, Samaru, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

*Subscriptions in Europe or Africa: £7.00 or the equivalent in any other convertible currency or in Naira.  
North America: $20.00 (US) or the equivalent in any other convertible currency or in Naira.

FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

What can we do to stop her suffering? 
The seven year old child shown in the photograph overleaf is just one of the 4,000 or so little girls, babies and women ‘circumcised’ each day. She was brought to Port Sudan Civil Hospital haemorrhaging severely after a village circumcision, without anaesthetic, in which she was excised and infibulated.

She required 36 hours of blood transfusion and was still feverish and delirious when the photo was taken, 48 hours after the operation. In great pain and in a severe state of anxiety, she was constantly flinching, moaning, flailing her arms and uncontrollably rolling her eyes.

This is a common result of the most extreme and yet, the most widespread type of so-called female circumcision in some countries. The operation involves cutting away the external genitalia, followed by stitching the two sides of the wound together in a way intended to guarantee virginity until marriage.

Why are women circumcised? 
These operations are medically unnecessary, agonisingly painful and extremely
constraints these impose on the Nigerian masses to the detriment of the society in general, one area given priority is that of the spread of information. The proceedings of the First Annual ‘Women in Nigeria’ Conference are in press and should be available shortly. An editorial committee has been established to prepare for publication the proceedings of the recent conference, which focused on ‘Women and the Family’. A series of pamphlets concerning women’s roles and rights are being planned to be published in the major Nigerian languages and to be widely distributed throughout Nigeria. Arrangements are also in hand to reach Nigerians through the media of television and radio.

Membership in the organisation, which presently includes representation from 15 of the 19 states of the Federation, is open to all women and men in Nigeria who subscribe to the organisation’s aims and objectives. Persons outside Nigeria are invited to subscribe to the Newsletter:* This is published regularly and is the major means of communication between members and a regular source of up-to-date information concerning ‘Women in Nigeria’ and its activities.

Additional information concerning ‘Women in Nigeria’ may be obtained from: The National Executive Committee, PO Box 253, Samaru, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

*Subscriptions in Europe or Africa: £7.00 or the equivalent in any other convertible currency or in Naira.
North America: $20.00 (US) or the equivalent in any other convertible currency or in Naira.

FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

What can we do to stop her suffering?
The seven year old child shown in the photograph overleaf is just one of the 4,000 or so little girls, babies and women ‘circumcised’ each day. She was brought to Port Sudan Civil Hospital haemorrhaging severely after a village circumcision, without anaesthetic, in which she was excised and infibulated.

She required 36 hours of blood transfusion and was still feverish and delirious when the photo was taken, 48 hours after the operation. In great pain and in a severe state of anxiety, she was constantly flinching, moaning, flailing her arms and uncontrollably rolling her eyes.

This is a common result of the most extreme and yet, the most widespread type of so-called female circumcision in some countries. The operation involves cutting away the external genitalia, followed by stitching the two sides of the wound together in a way intended to guarantee virginity until marriage.

Why are women circumcised?
These operations are medically unnecessary, agonisingly painful and extremely
dangerous. Some girls die from shock and loss of blood. Others develop psychiatric problems from the trauma. Many have chronic infections lasting a lifetime and there are numerous troubles with childbirth, intercourse and menstruation.

Most of the estimated 70 million circumcised women and girls live in certain parts of Africa and the Middle East. There the practice thrives for a variety of social reasons. For instance, in many places a girl who is not circumcised is considered unfit for marriage. Without a husband she might have no means to support herself. Women therefore get caught up in a vicious circle where survival may dictate that they submit to the circumciser’s knife.

The stranglehold of tradition
In many communities the social and cultural background to circumcision has become deeply entrenched in tradition. This is especially so where generations of poverty have bred ignorance about health issues. However, amongst many of the educated young there is a growing awareness that, in truth, circumcision has no medical, moral or religious justifications. Sadly, it is not always easy to challenge tradition. Take for example the following case of a mother who decided, with her husband, that their three daughters would not be subjected to the mutilations which she herself had undergone.

They were born in France, while my husband and I were finishing our studies. When we returned to Mali, my mother was the first to ask me if I had had my children excised and infibulated. I replied ‘no’, and stated explicitly that I had no intention of having it done. It was during the holidays. Having found work, I often left my children at my parents and came to fetch them at the weekend. One day, on the way back from work, I went to say hello to them. I was astonished not to see my daughters. Normally they would rush out to greet me. Then I asked my mother where they were. ‘They’re in that room’, she replied, indicating the place where they usually slept. I wondered if they were sleeping, or just didn’t know that I was there. I went into the room. There they were on the floor, on mats covered with cloths. At the sight of their swollen faces and eyes full of tears, I gasped and cried out; ‘What is it? What’s happened to you, my children?’ But even before the little occupants of the room could reply, the voice of my mother reached me: ‘Don’t you go disturbing MY grandchildren. They have been excised and infibulated this morning’.
Let African women speak out

This young mother, asked her views on putting an end to the practice, replied: 'I don’t know exactly how, but it doesn’t seem to me impossible. At what price I don’t know. But nothing can be done towards the abolition of these customs if the women concerned do not get together to impose their point of view'.

Progress is being made

FOWARD is a development from WAGFEI — an organisation originally set up under the Auspices of the Minority Rights Group, called — The Women’s Action Group on Female Excision & Infibulation. Founded in 1981 by a group of African, Arab and Western women with expertise and concern about this problem, our achievements have included:

• First raising at the United Nations the question of female circumcision as a violation of Human Rights.
• Opening up the debate on this sensitive aspect of women’s health in both developing countries and the UK by, for instance, advising BBC2 on the making of its much acclaimed documentary film about the issue.
• Helping African women publish their work as part of the struggle to combat the practice in their own countries.
• Fundraising to provide financial support for health, research and education projects in Sudan, Somalia, Egypt and Kenya.

In Victorian times a less-radical form of circumcision was sometimes practiced in Britain and the United States supposedly to curb the passions of young ladies. Amongst Westerners it has now died out, in the same way as other abuses of women such as widow burning in India and foot-binding in China have stopped.

The way ‘Foward’

One difficulty with WAGFEI was that the organisation’s name was too explicit for working quietly in areas hostile to change. Reconstituted as FOWARD, we can present ourselves more acceptably for what we are, in terms of our broadest objectives: that is, as a non-governmental development agency, working to improve women’s health and social conditions in Africa and elsewhere. FOWARD has joined hands with development workers where circumcision is a problem to fight this damaging practice in the following ways:

• Public education campaigns, by local community and health workers, for the people. These aim to create awareness of why the practice is both harmful and unnecessary.
• Training and redirecting the energies of village ‘midwives’ who make their living from circumcision, so that they can learn to practice positive aspects of health care.
• Carrying out research into the reasons for circumcision. This will help guide efforts to combat the practice in ways appropriate to different communities.

How you can help

In many poor countries women’s needs are the last to receive attention. FOWARD desperately needs your support to change this. Here is what you can do to help:

• Join as an Honorary Member of FOWARD: we ask you to subscribe at least £5 a year (£3 for claimants). In return, you will receive our newsletter three times a
year to keep you up-to-date with the progress being made. You will also be invited to any meetings being held in your area and to participate in other ways.

- **Become an Honorary Representative:** by undertaking to distribute our leaflets and organising at least one fundraising event a year. It need not be anything especially big or difficult — the kind of thing other people are doing is holding coffee mornings, collections, jumble sales or going on sponsored runs.
- **Give a Donation:** because most of FOWARD’s work is carried out through local community workers, doctors and nurses, our investment is in people. A little money goes a long way in countries where just £10 can pay a nurse for a week.
- **Affiliate Membership:** is open to groups such as clubs, firms, churches and student unions. The benefits are the same as for individuals, but we ask you to subscribe at least £15 a year.

**What not to do**

Many people from countries practicing female circumcision are presently defensive about the practice, which has existed with them for over 2,000 years. Unless the pressure for change is seen to be coming primarily from their own nationals, it can be counter-productive. For this reason please do not organise petitions, protest marches or letter-writing campaigns. Instead, give your help by donating money or your time to fundraise.

In this way help can be channelled to responsible local people who fully understand what needs doing in their area. Their biggest problem is a lack of financial resources to support their urgent work.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, Foward’s Director has been able to visit all the projects being supported to ensure that your money is being used in the most effective way possible. She, herself, was born in Ghana and trained as a medical scientist and sick children’s nurse in London. Most of her career has been dedicated towards fighting this awful practice which she first learned about as a young girl.

**You can help — join foward**

I/We enclose a donation and/or subscription for £ ........................................

Name: .................................................................

Address: .................................................................

.................................................................................. (please tick)

I would like to become a Honorary Member ☐

I would like to know more about becoming an Honorary Representative ☐

Our Group would like Affiliate Membership ☐

(NB. Banker’s order forms are available on request. We are in the process of registering as a charity therefore covenant forms should soon be available too.)

Please send form to: Mrs Stella Efua Graham, Director, FOWARD, Africa Centre, 38 King Street, London WC2E 8JT.
Clusters of graves lined our route through the arid terrain of Eritrea’s western lowland province of Barka, liberated by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) in autumn 1980 some two months before our visit. ‘These are all the graves of women’, commented a member of the team of EPLF paramedics which we were accompanying on a visit to an outlying village.

Surprisingly, these particular women had not been victims of Eritrea’s war with
Clusters of graves lined our route through the arid terrain of Eritrea's western lowland province of Barka, liberated by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in autumn 1980 some two months before our visit. 'These are all the graves of women', commented a member of the team of EPLF paramedics which we were accompanying on a visit to an outlying village.

Surprisingly, these particular women had not been victims of Eritrea's war with
Ethiopia, but rather casualties of the harsh and brutal conditions of Eritrea’s feudal, patriarchal and colonial society. Nearly all had died in childbirth — carried out in a state of semi-starvation. This was the expected and accepted fate of the area’s female population.

At the time of our visit to Barka, literacy and political education — about Eritrea’s history and geography — had only just begun and so far was for men only; the population were receiving free medical care for the first time in their lives and food and clothing rations from the Eritrean Relief Association. Otherwise, feudal production and social relations remained essentially as they had for centuries. The population of Barka, particularly the women, had scarcely begun to taste the benefits of the tremendous social transformations which are an integral part of the struggle for national self-determination in those areas under EPLF control.

The first shots in Eritrea’s battle for independence were in fact fired by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in 1961. This was one year before the Ethiopian government annexed the former Italian colony — its final act of abrogation of the 1952 UN resolution which linked Eritrea with Ethiopia and whose terms Haile Selassie had repeatedly violated.

The Eritrean independence movement split nearly a decade later. In 1970, fighters disillusioned with the ELF’s conservative leadership split off to form the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front. The EPLF was from the outset dedicated not to mere formal independence from Ethiopia, but to the complete destruction of the feudal system upon which successive colonial rulers had based their power. The EPLF’s policy of ‘liberating the land and the people step by step’ involved organising the most oppressed people — urban and rural workers, poor and landless peasants and women — to challenge the system which exploited them. In short, it meant a radical redistribution of wealth and political power within Eritrea itself.

Such a policy was a direct threat to the predominantly feudal leadership of the ELF, and for years following the EPLF’s birth passed in bloody civil war, as the ELF, then ten times the size of the EPLF, tried to crush its rebellious offspring. The EPLF not only managed to survive the civil war, but to flourish. The combination of military successes against the Ethiopians with its policy of painstaking organisation of the civilian population resulted in a steady increase in popular support, reflected in a growth in size of the Front itself. This enabled the EPLF to survive the massive escalation of the war following the Soviet intervention on the side of the Derg in 1978. This Soviet involvement forced the EPLF to withdraw from many areas it administered, including all towns except Nacfa, in the north. However, successive Soviet-backed offensives have failed to destroy the EPLF’s base area or undermine its popular support — which continues to grow. The latest and most sophisticated such offensive, the sixth, ground to a halt in mid-1982 after a few months of fighting gaining scarcely an inch of EPLF-controlled territory.

Our month-long tour with the EPLF took place in the Front’s Solomona refugee camp — then located inside Sudan but now brought within the country — and its base area, comprising the northern mountainous region of Sahel and a large part of the western lowland province of Barka. The Sahel mountains had been an EPLF stronghold since 1975, but Barka had only come under EPLF control in
the autumn of 1980. For the past 20 years prior to that it had been under the control of the ELF.

Barka has doubtless changed beyond recognition by now. But at the time of our visit, it provided a graphic illustration of the oppression Eritrea’s people, particularly women, have suffered for centuries but which is now fast disappearing. For elsewhere, in the highlands to the south, the eastern lowlands and Sahel province — the areas liberated or partially controlled by the EPLF — the feudal system has been fundamentally challenged. For any visitor to Eritrea, the most striking impression is that here is a society which is changing profoundly and unleashing the creative forces of an entire population. They are breaking down the fetters imposed by virtue of sex, class and age and pushing human achievement to its full potential. Nowhere is this more obvious than with regard to the changing position of women. Barka, its feudal production and social relations left in pristine purity over 21 years of ELF rule provided a vivid reminder of the starting point in this process of transformation and just how far things had progressed.

The social system in this area was based on a rigid caste structure composed of a ruling aristocracy of Natabs or Shumagales exacting heavy dues and services from a serf class — the Tigres. Most people in the area live almost exclusively on grain acquired through the sale of animals, particularly goats and goat milk, but rarely goat meat. Camels are prized for their milk as well as a means of transport, but in one village we visited the hundred or so camels were owned by a mere six families out of a total of 600 people.

Farming of sorghum and millet is practised along the river beds after the summer rains have receded and seeds are planted using sticks, at best a wooden plough. Although most villagers have their own small plots, they mainly, in classical feudal style, work the land of the Natabs in exchange for a quarter of the crop.

A similar system was practised among the semi-nomads and nomads in the eastern lowlands, but this has been changed by EPLF organised agrarian reform in 1977-78. Likewise in the central-southern highlands which are devoted to crop husbandry, two main land tenure systems operated, the Meriet Resti, where only the extended family had rights to use the land, and the Diesa. The Diesa system was the most widespread — an age-old system based on the allotment of land to each household in the village every seven years. It was severely disrupted by Italian and British land confiscations which led to acute land shortage and a growing pool of landless peasants in the village.

These three very different land tenure systems in feudal Eritrea shared one common feature — all excluded women from the right to own land, livestock and other property. In a country where 80 per cent of the population earned their living from the soil, their lack of property rights formed the basis of the complete economic subordination of women to their menfolk — fathers, husbands, brothers. Within this framework, the acute oppression of women differed only in the form it took, influenced above all by differing modes of production in different areas, but also by religion and custom.

The semi-nomadic, moslem women we saw in areas such as Barka, passed most of their post-pubescent lives in semi-isolation within the confines of their huts. There they work grinding grain and weaving the mats which form the huts'
walls, although, when the time comes to move to new grazing lands, it is the women who are responsible for dismantling the huts and loading up the animals. This they do while the menfolk sit eating and drinking coffee. Water and wood are collected by young girls and old women, who alone enjoy the right to move freely.

Only on rare occasions, such as funerals, do they have the chance to enjoy the company of other women. Mixing with men other than their husbands is unheard of. Within the family, meals are taken separately, the women only eating that left over after the men and children have finished their meal — a significant factor behind the severe malnutrition and high mortality amongst the women of Barka. Even a woman’s husband is not allowed to see her face unveiled, and she is not supposed to look at him at all — serving his food and coffee with eyes downcast, if she’s lucky sneaking a glance at him through her one unveiled eye. In the eastern lowlands, some of the poorest women of the Tigre class were, however, forced by necessity to work as agricultural labourers. But this activity simply earned them a place at the very bottom of the social status ladder.

In sharp contrast to the women of the western lowlands, the life of the peasant women in the predominantly Christian highlands was one of continual back-breaking labour. They rose about 3 am to begin the laborious task of grinding grain by hand, using a stone, and then accompanied their husbands to the fields. There they joined in all work except ploughing, from which custom excluded them. On their return home at the end of the day, they prepared food for the family and carried out domestic chores — including washing their husbands’ feet — rarely sleeping before midnight.

In both the highland and the lowland areas, women are subject to a never-ending cycle of pregnancies and childbirth. These, combined with their poor nutritional
state, contribute to an ever-worsening anaemia, leading to a permanent state of exhaustion and, frequently, premature death. While death from anaemia amongst the Tigre women of Barka is a direct consequence of the feudal subsistence economy, amongst the peasant women of the highlands it is largely precipitated by war. Aerial bombardment by the Ethiopians has been particularly intense in the highland plateau, where it has drastically disrupted production and left countless numbers of families completely homeless.

The practice of arranged marriages is still far from eradicated. In the highlands, the bride’s family pays the husband, and in the lowlands, the situation is reversed. Girls as young as 12 and 13 can be married off, often to men years older than themselves. Amongst the Moslems of the lowlands, men are allowed several wives, although this is circumscribed by a man’s economic status. Poor men usually confine themselves to one or two.

Infertility, divorce and loss of virginity before marriage all carry tremendous social stigma. In Barka, infertility among women is particularly common, invariably following infection with venereal disease. This is contracted by their menfolk on their travels — selling animals to neighbouring Sudan. It never strikes the man that it could be he and not his wife who is infertile. The standard response is to bring a new wife into the household, following which the first wife is either ignored or divorced. Divorce is the prerogative of the husband, and if requested by the woman rarely conceded. The latter case leaves the woman totally destitute.

The greatest humiliation and ruination follows loss of virginity. The sheets are scrupulously checked for blood on the wedding night, and any woman suspected not to be a virgin is forthwith returned to her parents — naked except for a sack, daubed with charcoal and tied over the back of a donkey. No woman so stigmatised could remain in her village and her only recourse is to leave for the city, where she invariably ends up in prostitution.

The status of women in Eritrean society is so low, that while the birth of a boy is celebrated by slaughtering a sheep, the birth of a girl is greeted only by silence. The father may even boycott the house.

Not surprisingly, women were excluded from all political life in the village and had no chance of education. Even amongst the middle classes in the urban areas, illiteracy amongst girls was widespread. Berhane, a nurse at the EPLF hospital in Barka, told us that she commonly advises the husbands of anaemic women to slaughter a goat and so provide women with valuable iron. But, explained Berhane, ‘They say it’s easier to get a new wife than to replace a goat’.

Nearly a century of colonial rule exacerbated the inequalities in Eritrea’s feudal society, at the same time unleashing the very social forces which were ultimately to challenge it and eventually bringing women onto the political scene. Italian and British land confiscations created a growing pool of landless peasants who were compelled to seek work on foreign-owned plantations or in the fast growing urban centres. Among them were many women — always forced to take the lowest paid, least skilled jobs.

In the lowlands, land confiscations deprived nomads of large areas of grazing land and increased the gap between the Nabtabs and the Shumagales and the 1940s saw a widespread anti-serfdom movement and some modifications were
made in the feudal system.

In the 1950s, growing resentment of harsh working conditions, the erosion of political rights and finally the banning of the General Union of Labour Unions culminated in the general strike of 1958, in which many women workers were actively involved. This growing movement for independence was brutally suppressed by the Ethiopians. While armed struggle broke out three years later in the western lowlands under the leadership of the ELF, it was not until the formation of the EPLF that the different strands of Eritrean resistance to colonial rule — highland peasants, nomads, urban workers and intelligentsia — found equal voice. It was only then too, that women were deliberately and seriously included in the military and political struggle for independence. Up until this time they had contributed in whatever way they could — throwing hot pepper into the eyes of Ethiopian troops, taking food and water to the fighters and caring for the wounded. Some had even joined the ELF where they were almost invariably confined to the traditional female roles of cooking and nursing.

With the emergence of the EPLF from the civil war in 1974, women were not only encouraged to join the Front, but were from the outset involved on an equal basis as the men. What was a trickle in 1977 — mainly urban educated women — became a flood in 1975, as a series of EPLF military successes saw thousands of women flocking to join the Front. By joining the EPLF, Eritrean women not only had the chance to join in the struggle for their country’s destiny from which they had so long been excluded, but also to escape the intolerable conditions they suffered as women. Many, by joining the Front, avoided arranged marriages. Those from Asmara in particular, left behind the dangers of an occupied city in which rape by Ethiopian soldiers and arrest, followed by torture involving sexual humiliation and abuse, were commonplace. As fighters, they escaped the narrow confines their gender had hitherto imposed. Over 30 per cent of the EPLF cadre fighters and activists is now composed of women. They come from all backgrounds — urban, rural, peasant, nomad, Christian and Moslem. They fight and die in the front lines alongside men. They crew tanks, take part in guerilla units and generally suffer the same hardships and take the same responsibilities as their male comrades. In the various departments of the front they learn skills previously reserved exclusively for men. For example, in the Front’s central garage, priority in training goes to women and to men from nomadic backgrounds, who have so far been equally deprived of the opportunity to acquire mechanical skills. Many women who remain in Ethiopian-occupied areas take part in dangerous underground activities for the Front, risking and often losing their lives in the process.

Once the first women had joined the EPLF’s ranks as fighters, it was far easier to organise the civilian women in the rural areas. In the highland areas the task was simplified by the fact that contact with the cities had modified many traditional mores. Also, highland women spent more time together in groups. Female EPLF cadres joined in wedding and funeral parties, even attended church with the women. The discussions which ensued were soon followed by organisation on the basis of a cell system — at first secret and then open as the EPLF gained more support in the village and consolidated its military position. Organisation always involved literacy classes and political discussion. This growing involvement was formalised in the founding Congress of the Women’s Association in 1978.
Menya Kubrom was chairperson of the Peasant Association in the highland village of Zagur until it was reoccupied by the Ethiopians in 1978. She then moved with six of her eight children to Solomona camp. The remaining two children are fighters with the EPLF. Menya had been organised with the EPLF since 1973, and described how EPLF fighters used to come disguised during the night to the village — then under Ethiopian occupation — and teach the villagers how to read and write and talk with them. Gradually the people became organised with the Front through the cell system, and by 1976 the number of people organised had grown sufficiently large to elect a People's Assembly to run the village. Menya was one of the 33 people elected.

Land reform was one of the burning issues in the village. For years the Diesa had not been applied and the most fertile land had remained in the possession of a handful of feudal lords and rich peasants. A growing number of people, particularly newcomers to the village and, of course, all women, had no land at all. The issue was the subject of extensive and lively discussion in the Women's and Peasant's Association, and, as a result of pressure from women and the poorest peasants — who together formed the majority in the People's Assembly — it was eventually decided that the Diesa should not only be reactivated, but that women should receive land, and in equal amount to men.

'Land reform had a really dynamic effect on the village', explained Menya, who described how the women started to get involved in the affairs of the village and in helping the Front. 'All the women from the village began to organise a rota to help in the front-line hospitals and take water to the fighters'.

Some land which was left over following redistribution was farmed co-operatively, and the produce used to run a cafe and a shop for the village, while the whole population — over a thousand people — all joined in to build a huge meeting hall for the community. Co-operation extended to working the land for those incapable of doing so themselves — disabled people and divorced women, although in the latter case, some women came to defy the customs of centuries and began to plough the land themselves.

Other changes which radically transformed the lives of the villagers, particularly the women, were the introduction of grinding mills, cutting out hours of gruelling labour, and medical and maternity care through the EPLF's health department.

Organisation of the lowland Moslem women was much more problematic as we learnt from the experiences of Sitel, a Tigre from Afabet in the eastern lowlands. She had been involved in the EPLF since it liberated the northern town of Afabet from Ethiopian occupation in 1977, and is now a member of the People's Assembly of Wadi Lbaka in the eastern lowlands. Like Menya Kubrom, since being involved she had learned to read and write and now owned land following the expropriation of absentee landlords in the area. She had been an active participant in the process of land reform through her involvement in the peasant and women's association and the people's assembly. She now holds special responsibility for social affairs in the area where she lives, which includes organising admissions to the EPLF's hospital at Nacfa, determining eligibility for food aid and checking up on the conditions of animals.

She described the difference between her life now and before she was organised as, 'the difference between heaven and earth'.

Let alone going to public meetings and speaking to men, I was never even allowed to speak
to my own husband in the past. I just used to pull my veil down over my face and hand him his food.

EPLF organisation of the lowland women in Sitel's town of Afabet began first amongst the girls, on a house to house basis. Female EPLF cadres used to visit each house twice a week and teach the girls to read and write. The girls soon started to insist on daily lessons — only possible if they were all assembled and taught together in one place. Some of the more reactionary fathers and brothers did not take kindly to this idea and invoked Islamic law to support their objections. The EPLF replied by saying that you can only pray in the mosque if you have a country and for this everyone must join together.

Supported by this logic and many of the towns more conscious men, the girls won their demands and, when the first people's assembly was elected, two of these young women were included. By the end of the year a further 20 trained as people's militia. Emboldened by the example of their daughters, the married women followed suit. Four months after its inception the people's assembly was dissolved and fresh elections held to include representation from the newly established Women's Association.

Sitel's political involvement invoked the wrath of her husband, who not only failed to accept his wife's right to leave the confines of the home, but also saw the generalised transformation taking place in the area as a threat to his relatively privileged position as a small trader. There were also long-standing problems within the marriage — disputes over money and the way he treated their daughter. Sitel took the case before the People's Assembly, which, after several fruitless attempts to reconcile the couple, finally ruled in favour of a divorce, which divided the property equally between the husband and the wife — 'unheard of before', said Sitel.

While Sitel's growing awareness precipitated the end of her marriage, in many cases the transformation in men's perception of women has been as radical as that of women's perception of themselves. Sitel's brother, El Amin, used to take it upon himself to beat not only his own female relatives, but those of his neighbours if they in any way stepped out of line — leaving the house without male permission for example.

When I look back at how I was, I'm amazed at how I've changed. Not only have I managed to accept my wife and sister joining the women's and peasant's associations, I even have a sister in the People's Assembly. It was ignorance which prevented me from understanding the question of women in the past, but now, after a long process of internal struggle, I know and accept that the emancipation of women is necessary for the revolution, and I'm actively working for it.

Menya Kubrom explained how her new-found rights had changed her relationship with her husband for the better.

Before I used to spend all my time in the kitchen and never had a chance to chat with my husband. I didn't own any property, could never leave the house alone and wasn't allowed to vote. I just had to do what my husband told me to do. Now I can not only vote, but hold public office. We women administer village affairs where before it was only men. My husband and I own our property jointly and we work together and discuss and study together. I can travel freely and if I have to go out in the evening on some business for the village or the Front, then my husband does the cooking and takes care of the children.

It is among the fighters themselves that the greatest strides have been made in
eradicating feudal attitudes towards women and breaking down traditional male-female sex roles. An important milestone was the marriage law of 1978, whereby for the first time fighters were allowed to marry. In contrast to the feudal practice of arranged marriage, the decision to marry now rests solely with the two partners involved, based on considerations of love and comradeship, not religion or social class. A classic example is that of a Moslem, son of a nomad with only four years formal education married to a Christian university graduate. Such a marriage — unheard of before the new law — is far more a reflection of a changing consciousness amongst the Eritrean people, both fighters and civilians, than a simple consequence of a new legal right. The law was only introduced after extensive and often animated debates amongst the fighters and EPLF civilian organisations concerning the relationship between men and women.

Fighters marry and have children in the full knowledge that at any moment, either one of them may die, particularly if one of the pair is a frontline fighter. Perhaps one of the most convincing examples of the Front's commitment to women's emancipation is the existence of a huge nursery for the fighters' children. The birth of a child does not spell the end of the women's involvement as a fighter. Instead, the woman stays with her child from six to nine months, until it is weaned and then returns to her normal duties, even if these involve fighting in the frontline, visiting her child every six months for two weeks if she has time. The children are cared for in groups by teams of barefoot doctors — male as well as female.

The sight of men changing nappies, bathing babies and feeding toddlers with obvious enjoyment is the most promising sign that, in this revolution perhaps, women's emancipation may not come to mean 'The double shift' — women participating in men's work, while continuing to bear total responsibility for the children and the housework. At the front it's certainly not uncommon to see a man cooking, while a woman fighter sits and chats or busies herself cleaning her Kalashinkov automatic rifle. Amongst the civilians it's far more unusual for men to take on 'women's' work, and Menya Kubrom admitted that men like her husband — who cooks when she's out — are still rare. The provision of nurseries for the children of civilians — as was planned for Keren before Ethiopian reoccupation in 1978 — may help hurry the process along.

But what about the status of women in an independent Eritrea? 'The extent to which the struggle for women's liberation will continue after independence depends on our participation as women', said Asgedet Ghirmazious, chairwoman of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) in Europe, 'and as long as things continue as they are doing now I am hopeful'. The NUEW, comprising both fighters and civilian women, has developed at an incredible pace both quantitatively and qualitatively since its founding Congress in 1979. 'Traditionally, Eritrean women are very shy', said Asgedet. 'Over the last two years, however, amongst the European branch there has been a fantastic change. Women are really conscious that they have their own organisation and are working hard for it. Also, especially since last year I've noticed a much greater sense of co-operation amongst women — a coming together instead of rivalry'.

The progress towards this new found self-awareness and confidence has not been entirely smooth. Twice monthly the women meet for political discussions as women, in addition to their participation in mixed meetings as members of EPLF worker or student associations. As well as discussing the works of women
revolutionaries, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Alexander Kollonatai, they learn to know themselves as women, discussing pregnancy, childbirth, birth control and sex and talking about their own experiences in their past, their work and their everyday lives. ‘When these discussions first started’, explained Asgedet, the relations between the men and the women in the organisation began to deteriorate quite noticeably. The men didn’t know what had hit them, as women became more aware of their oppression and of their rights. In order to open their eyes, it was decided that the men should also study what the women had been studying. However, the men wanted to follow the study programme in a mixed group with the women. The women were adamant that the discussions should be carried out separately, coming together once a month to discuss in common. There was a big dispute over this, but the women got their way, and there has been a very noticeable improvement in men’s understanding’.

One apparently glaring contradiction remains. The 37 members of the EPLF’s Central Committee are still all men. One explanation is practical. When the Central Committee was elected at the EPLF’s first National Congress in 1977, one prerequisite for candidature was at least two and a half years organisational experience within the Front. Almost no women had been members that long and the majority of men elected had in fact been members of the Front for far longer.

The EPLF and the NUEW say they are not interested in token gestures, putting a certain percentage of women in posts they haven’t earnt for the sake of appearances, while the vast majority of the female population continue to suffer under the age-long conditions of subjugation. ‘We don’t want to be there as a show’, said Asgedet, ‘only when we’re capable of doing the job’.

As a result of the uncertain military situation since 1978, a second National Congress has been overdue since 1980. With the failure of the Ethiopians’ sixth offensive, it seems likely that the second National Congress and the election of a fresh central committee will be held soon. Since the first Congress many women have worked their way through to posts of considerable responsibility — in the liberation army, and departments of the Front and in the EPLF’s mass organisations. ‘There are now many confident women, quite capable of holding positions on the central committee’, said Asgedet, ‘and I’m convinced that at the next Congress we’ll see many of them elected’.

Nicole Anne Cowan

WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN ERITREA: AN INTERVIEW

The Second Congress of the National Union of Eritrean Women was held from 17-19 January 1983 in the liberated areas of Eritrea near the EPLA frontlines. The following interview was given by Luul Gegreab, Secretary General of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWn) to EPLF’s own radio station immediately after the Congress. It adds to Cowan’s eye-witness account of three years ago a report on the progress of the Union in the four years since it was founded. This Review was privileged to have had a representative at the opening ceremony of the Congress.
revolutionaries, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Alexander Kollonatai, they learn to know themselves as women, discussing pregnancy, childbirth, birth control and sex and talking about their own experiences in their past, their work and their everyday lives. 'When these discussions first started', explained Asgedet, the relations between the men and the women in the organisation began to deteriorate quite noticeably. The men didn't know what had hit them, as women became more aware of their oppression and of their rights. In order to open their eyes, it was decided that the men should also study what the women had been studying. However, the men wanted to follow the study programme in a mixed group with the women. The women were adamant that the discussions should be carried out separately, coming together once a month to discuss in common. There was a big dispute over this, but the women got their way, and there has been a very noticeable improvement in men's understanding'.

One apparently glaring contradiction remains. The 37 members of the EPLF's Central Committee are still all men. One explanation is practical. When the Central Committee was elected at the EPLF's first National Congress in 1977, one prerequisite for candidature was at least two and a half years organisational experience within the Front. Almost no women had been members that long and the majority of men elected had in fact been members of the Front for far longer.

The EPLF and the NUEW say they are not interested in token gestures, putting a certain percentage of women in posts they haven't earnt for the sake of appearances, while the vast majority of the female population continue to suffer under the age-long conditions of subjugation. 'We don't want to be there as a show', said Asgedet, 'only when we're capable of doing the job'.

As a result of the uncertain military situation since 1978, a second National Congress has been overdue since 1980. With the failure of the Ethiopians' sixth offensive, it seems likely that the second National Congress and the election of a fresh central committee will be held soon. Since the first Congress many women have worked their way through to posts of considerable responsibility — in the liberation army, and departments of the Front and in the EPLF's mass organisations. 'There are now many confident women, quite capable of holding positions on the central committee', said Asgedet, 'and I'm convinced that at the next Congress we'll see many of them elected'.

Nicole Anne Cowan

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN ERITREA: AN INTERVIEW

The Second Congress of the National Union of Eritrean Women was held from 17-19 January 1983 in the liberated areas of Eritrea near the EPLA frontlines. The following interview was given by Luul Gegreab, Secretary General of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWn) to EPLF's own radio station immediately after the Congress. It adds to Cowan's eye-witness account of three years ago a report on the progress of the Union in the four years since it was founded. This Review was privileged to have had a representative at the opening ceremony of the Congress.
Q. Comrade Luul; How many women participated in the Second Congress of NUEWn, where did they come from, and who were they?

A. Two-hundred and fifty-seven (257) representatives participated in the Congress. They came from all corners of Eritrea — from Semhar, Denkil, Serae, Hamasien, Akeleguzai, Upper and Lower Barka, Senhit, Sahel, and the Kunama zone. And from outside — the Middle East, Europe and North America. The class composition of the participants comprised: one-fifth workers, one-fifth herders and two-fifth peasant farmers.

Q. What did the Congress conclude about the status of the Eritrean women’s movement at this time?

A. At this time the NUEWn has extended its roots throughout Eritrea. It is to be remembered this was not true at the time of our premier congress in 1979. Now, the union has made its presence felt inside Eritrea, even in those areas that were under ELF; and by organising women from all nationalities and training cadres, the union has raised its struggle to a higher level.

Q. How much have the Eritrean women succeeded in gaining their rights by joining this organisation and waging their struggle under the guidance of the EPLF?

A. Eritrean women are playing a big role, either through this organisation or otherwise, in the on-going struggle. They are participating and contributing their share in the committee of people’s assemblies and other people’s democratic establishments. The number of women cadres is increasing due to the growing participation of women in the training programmes for political cadres. Women are also joining the people’s army in large numbers to combat the colonial aggressor side by side with their male compatriots. There are quite a few women who are shouldering leadership responsibilities in both the people’s militia and the people’s army. An important act that should be mentioned is that in times of land distribution, women have through their representation, asserted their rights. Due to the backward
traditional production relations, women in the past have been excluded from owning productive tools including land. They are now able to join small-scale elementary co-operatives which alleviates their lack of implements. In their struggle against the traditional marriage, which is anti-equality and anti-women’s rights, and perpetuates male supremacy, women are properly following EPLF’s new marriage laws. Today, many women are marrying on the basis of their own free will and choice rather than somebody else’s, as the traditional marriage was. Since the backward aspects of the tradition are being replaced by revolutionary relations, all those oppressions against women that have been practiced under different cultural and religious guises are dying. This is the result of not only the struggling women, but also the struggle of our people as a whole. In general, what has been achieved so far in the direction of securing equality by the Eritrean women should not be underestimated. We believe the struggle that lies ahead and the victories that are yet to be achieved are even greater. Realising the importance of skills and abilities in a liberation struggle, the Congress has agreed to give a special attention to raising the skill levels and political consciousness of women through education.

Q. What are some of the plans your Congress had drawn to deal with the problems you face?

A. The centralisation of our zonal branches and the production of dedicated cadres are two of the important issues the Congress agreed should receive a high priority. Another important issue was the need for a membership drive so that more women can participate in the on-going dual struggle for independence from Ethiopian colonialism and for emancipation and liberation. As I said earlier, the Congress has agreed to raise the skill and cultural levels of women which at the moment are very low. Our organisation will do what it can to help women eliminate illiteracy and solve their economic problems on the basis of the principle of self-reliance. Further, we have plans to undertake different projects that will help to raise women’s skills in handicraft. For the projects to succeed, we will actively seek aid from other women organisations and humanitarian organisations. Recognising the need to study the objective conditions of the Eritrean women and their struggle, our Congress has drawn a plan to establish zonal study groups. Additionally, the Congress found it timely to formally assign women comrades who possess writing skills to our publication committee. Finally, the Congress agreed that more effort is needed to expand and strengthen our relations with women’s organisations in foreign countries.

Q. As was evident in the Second Congress, Eritrean women in the liberated areas are organised and politicised, and have reached a stage where they can freely and openly discuss issues. This was made possible perhaps due to the unrestricted activities by the Front and your organisation. What about those areas that are still under enemy control; have there been any successes?

A. Due to the indiscriminate fascistic acts of persecution by the enemy, many of our members have been jailed or shot. No fascistic act however can destroy our struggle. In spite of the suppression and tremendous danger, women are boldly struggling in the areas that are still under enemy control. Our organising activities in those areas are expanding. When I say this, however, I do not mean to minimise the hinderance caused by the enemy’s (suppressive) acts. Many of our cadres have been forced to give up their organisational works and join the people’s army to avoid enemy persecution.

Q. One of the issues the Congress discussed was the dual membership of women,
i.e. membership in women’s organisation in addition to membership in other mass organisations. How important is the question and how did the congress view it?

**A.** The importance of this issue basically lies in the fact that it touches the various prevailing views regarding the struggle of women. In general, if we were to classify the views into two extreme categories, one proposes that the struggle of women should be carried out by women alone. We understand this view negates the class nature of the struggle. The other view proposes that the struggle of women should be carried out inside the various social organisations and that it is not important to view the issue separately. This view fails to see the double oppression of women. On our part, we reject both views because they are incorrect. We are aware that women in general are victims of class oppression and male suppression. To solve this problem correctly, the avenue of struggle we are following is for the Eritrean women (1) to take up arms and participate in the armed struggle against colonialism, (2) to fully support the on-going class struggle, and (3) to organise themselves to struggle against male dominance, cultural oppression, and for their equality and liberation. Therefore, we strive to organise Eritrean women not only in the women’s organisation, but in their respective trade association as well.

**Q.** The Second Congress has directed that the expansion of external relations deserve more attention. What kind of relations has your union so far established with other women’s organisations?

**A.** It is difficult to say our union has established the desired level of relations with external organisations. Nevertheless, we have been able to establish some relations in the Middle East, Europe and recently, in North America, and in some parts of Africa. Since the basic objective of all women’s struggles is to gain liberation, peace and equality, we remind the different women’s organisations that it is their duty to be concerned with the war situation in Eritrea and to work towards its termination. So far, on an international level, we have established good relations with the General Association of Arab Women and the International Association of Women for Peace and Liberation. We are also trying to gain admission to the United Nation’s 10th Anniversary of Women so that we can expand our relations. Our activities in Africa has been limited due to the various restrictive situations. Nevertheless, we will increase our activities in the future to extend and consolidate our relations with African women’s organisations.

**Q.** Is there any message you want to transmit to the Eritrean women?

**A.** I call upon the Eritrean women, first, to understand the need to arm themselves and fight against the enemy at this critical stage of the struggle for national independence; secondly, to support the unity proposal drawn by the popular Front and to struggle for its success; and third, to join their true representative, the National Union of Eritrean Women, so that they can participate in the on-going struggle for their equality and for their rights.
Eritrean Women’s Conference, September/October 1984

We have received the following message from NUEWn:

We are writing to inform you about our plans to organise a conference next September/October (1984) on the subject of ‘Eritrean Women’. The objective is to make further publicity for the general cause of our national liberation struggle, as well as examining the particular situation, problems and achievements of Eritrean women within that process.

We would envisage inviting organisations and individuals who are interested in the question of women’s aspirations within a national liberation struggle in the Third World, as well as those who might be prepared to give support to concrete projects in health or education for Eritrean women — inside Eritrea and in emigrant communities in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America and Australia.

We are planning to invite some women from the liberated parts of Eritrea: from the battle-field and the EPLF departments of education, health and social services, and representatives of members of NUEWn (National Union of Eritrean Women) inside Eritrea as well as in the above-mentioned parts of the world. Discussions will therefore focus on the situation of women in the country and those in the far-flung emigrant communities, and most important — the links between the two.

Before proceeding with our decision on the exact format and content of the conference, we would like to consult people like yourselves to see what interest you would have, not only in participating in the conference but also in making suggestions as to how the conference could best achieve its objectives.

We have agreed to be a post box and forward any comments, suggestions, expressions of interest and offers (to publicise, raise funds, etc.) to NUEWn, so please write to us at the Editorial address.
THE FAMINE IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA

In recent months, Sudan has been caught up with another severe problem in the neighbouring territories — providing a base for relief operations in the drought affected areas of northern Ethiopia, Tigre and Eritrea. This background to the current famine by an Ethiopian geographer attempts to chart some of the political and social causes of this 'natural' disaster. The practical importance of understanding the roots of the famine has implications for relief. It is important that those who want to give practical expression to their sympathy consider contributing to the relief agencies of the Eritreans and Tigreans operating beyond the control of the Ethiopian government.

The current famine in northern Ethiopia provides a further example of the apparent fragility of environmental resources there; it bolsters the view that such human tragedies are a product of fickle environments. But environmental factors
South Africa's Transkei
The Political Economy of an "Independent" Bantustan
Roger Southall

The granting of formal political independence to Transkei by South Africa in 1976 occasioned a wide-ranging controversy as to the nature, meaning, and likely consequences of the "homeland" policy.

In the most detailed examination of any Bantustan so far, the author traces the historical evolution of the Transkei region from precolonial times through the successive eras of segregation and apartheid. He focuses on the origins and continuing role of the Transkei as a labor reservoir. Emphasizing that the underdevelopment of the Transkei is integral to the development of South African capitalism, Southall argues that in the end the "homeland" policy has served only to maintain apartheid and to continue the exploitation of the black majority.

$20.00 CL6143 (cloth) $8.50 PB6151 (paper)

Please add $1 for the first book, 25¢ for each additional book, when ordering by mail.
Monthly Review Press, 155 West 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10011

THE FAMINE IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA

In recent months, Sudan has been caught up with another severe problem in the neighboring territories — providing a base for relief operations in the drought affected areas of northern Ethiopia, Tigre and Eritrea. This background to the current famine by an Ethiopian geographer attempts to chart some of the political and social causes of this 'natural' disaster. The practical importance of understanding the roots of the famine has implications for relief. It is important that those who want to give practical expression to their sympathy consider contributing to the relief agencies of the Eritreans and Tigreans operating beyond the control of the Ethiopian government.

The current famine in northern Ethiopia provides a further example of the apparent fragility of environmental resources there; it bolsters the view that such human tragedies are a product of fickle environments. But environmental factors
are only part of the causes of the current famine. Cultural and political influences have had a very strong impact too, as will be suggested here.

The northern Ethiopian peoples are descendents of ancient civilisations that flourished around the northern and eastern Red Sea regions. The people are closely related to the Nubian and Arabian ancestors. The last major civilisation was around 1st-10th century AD. This empire of Axumite people emerged as a powerful force in the Red Sea area between the 3rd-5th century. At its peak, this empire extended to southern Yemen and had strong trade, religious, political and cultural ties with the Mediterranean, Egyptians, Arabs, Nubians and the Far East. Cereals, fruits, vegetables, spices, cotton, honey, etc., were cultivated in abundance. Gold, silver, iron and copper were mined and coins were minted. This society had perfected its own script, which is still in use. Irrigation practices, animal husbandry, gardening, craftsmanship, trading and building were relatively better organised than at any time thereafter.

Except for these glorious centuries and few spells of abundance, the history of the northern Ethiopian peoples has been of untold misery. Chronic food shortages, epidemics, tropical diseases, internal and external wars and periodic drought, locust and famine has gradually but surely uprooted this region from its past gains. On many occasions its culture was disrupted — villages, crops, houses were either raided, looted or burned and farms pillaged. Oral tradition and folklore are still full of reminders of bad days and hostile periods.

The chronic food shortage, rampant epidemics and endemic famine situation prevalent in rural areas had always surprised 16th and 17th century European travellers who testified to the inability of the social and political environment to overcome natural disaster. The whole fabric of Ethiopian life had remained unchanged. Rural life is still a living museum of centuries old agony. People are still dying of hunger, lack of sanitation, malnourishment by man-made and natural calamities that had already haunted and mitigated their ancestors. According to Kirsty Wright, a relief worker and eye witness (1979):

The land is strewn with boulders and stones amongst which the stubble of last year's sorghum pokes itself ... The cattle themselves are painfully thin, their young calves already old with the skin hanging down their flanks ... Water has to be carried twice a day from the wells dug in the dry river beds ... 5km away ... Grinding is done by hand ... Very few adolescents were in evidence ... and this is just in part due to the high infant mortality rate, joining resistance fighters ... Everywhere I went people asked me for medicine, most of them have local treatments ...

Many people are, however, baffled by the current famine in Ethiopia. Agricultural experts have been remarking that with improved technology the Ethiopian farmers could make their country the granary of Africa and the Middle East. Yet, nearly 200 years ago, the Scottish traveller, James Bruce (1790) remarked that while ‘one harvest gives plenty in Egypt’ the Ethiopian peasant, in spite of ‘the advantages of triple harvests, which cost no fallowing, weeding, manure or other expensive processes’, was always ‘poor and miserable’.

It is evident, therefore, why there has long been controversy between the supporters and critics of successive governments as to what causes such miserable conditions. Governments have always liked to put the blame entirely on natural disasters or, if pressed, pass it on to previous governments. The critics on the other hand have always argued that more of the famine dated back to time
immemorial systematic negligence by the past and present governments, while the same people are left to carry the brunt of the conflicts over and over again. During the last century alone, successive battles against the Ottoman Empire, Egyptians and Italians, led to the uncultivation of lands; villages and crops were destroyed, communication was cut off, hunger and disease usually spread rapidly, and thousands of human lives and livestock had to perish.

This was repeated again during the 1935 Italian Invasion. Most northern farmers were uprooted whilst the Emperor Haile Selassie was wandering in London and Europe. Such was the negligence and depth of resentment against the central government that the Emperor retaliated by smashing the 1943 popular uprising by bombing market places and taking the lives of a massive number of women and children, thereafter determined to systematically dehumanise the northern section as a whole.

The basic nature of the famine in recent years (1970-1975, 1982-1983) is not very different. Drought is a factor, but undeniably secondary. It triggers and accelerates the worsening conditions, but the underlying socio-political factors, past or present, that have lead to the prolonged negligence and undernourishment, marginally subsistent rural economy and total lack of education and medicine, are some of the real causes of the miseries in this part of the world. These were the attributes of the feudal system that were deeply rooted in the country. These were the attributes that the self-appointed ‘revolutionary’ government of Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam promised to dismantle for good. Except for the changes of ‘actors’, a few real gains and a lot of ‘revolutionary’ rhetoric, poverty and underdevelopment are still ravaging the entire population.

The injustices of land distribution, wealth, and education under Haile Selassie left millions of poor peasants to starve to death with the onset of minor or major drier climatic periods. The need for change, therefore, was inevitable and the cry for ‘land to the tiller’ and ‘food to the hungry’ were among the few slogans that were reverberating through the entire nation. After the overthrow of the ‘ancient regime’ the peasants of the southern provinces at least gained the land they cherished. In return for land reform, however, the peasants have been forced to sell crops at unreasonably lower prices. Peasant associations have been ordered to supply younger recruits to the military; if the quota fails, peasants are kidnapped from the market place and their crops confiscated. Thus, because of the military governments’ obstinate determination to end the civil war in Eritrea by military means, the burden and sacrifices both in crop and human lives have become unbearable. This only escalates social disorder, the very accusation the government dreads. Who is to blame here? Can the entire population sin against treason? One thing is very evident though; for fear of repercussion and/or forced conscription and confiscation of crops, many of the peasants have abandoned market and other public places. This in turn has created an acute and serious food supply crisis in the urban areas. Widespread civil unrest, chronic food shortages, rapid decline of agriculture, unco-operative workers and civil servants are recently acquired problems. Peasant and worker confidence is very low. Every day there is less food, and less food means more empty stomachs in the urban population. The result is more civil unrest.

Prolonged undernourishment and backward and obsolete practices are easily attributable to complex and interdependent factors which heavily revolve around
the negligence and abuse of successive governments and of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Although the Ethiopian Church has not been blamed, its role at the centre of the rural culture contributes much to the adamantly conservative peasant culture. It has always exerted a powerful influence on both local and national level, and is still a force to reckon with since it still commands immense prestige among the rural population. Nonetheless, some Ethiopian critics have argued that the central role of the church in the life of the ordinary people and its declared position against modernisation has amounted to nothing less than 'anti-economic teachings and practices'.

The local religious code of conduct has had a very devastating effect on the economic and human resources. Firstly, it demands very strict fasting of between 180-250 days a year. During these days no food or water is to be taken until noon. Furthermore, the meal is devoid of animal products. There is no age limit, but even children as young as 10, sick people and very old people, are encouraged to fast. It is considered noble and saintly. People dying during fasting is not uncommon. This centuries-old religious culture has weakened and consistently drained the labour force. Secondly, religious holidays, which are too many, are also strictly observed. This takes the form of going to church, idling and feasting. There are only some 8 to 12 working days in a month; the remainder is holiday.

Within these few days, ploughing, weeding and threshing have to be done by hand, with weak oxen and simple and obsolete tools. It must be mentioned here that the outcry about shortage of rainfall is superficial in the light of the above reasons. If peasants cannot effectively use the rainy days, due to fear of God and other superstitions, such chronic shortage of food and undernourishment cannot be blamed on a rainfall lower than expected. Moreover, the Church, until recently, possessed one-third to one-quarter of the land and wealth. The peasants are from time to time expected to assist in maintaining the Church's premises, land and major festivals. Taxation in kind is also taken for the various religious rituals, such as burial and prayer services for bereaved families, circumcision and christening of children. The mourning feasts which are a great economic burden to the poor families are more often than welcomed. There are at least five major events — on the seventh, twelfth and fortieth day, six month and/or the first year, and a big feast on the seventh year after the death. Furthermore, at least one or two minor, but monthly, and one major yearly religious festival are observed by most of the peasant families. The burden on the economy of the family is incalculable. The backwardness of the rural agriculture is therefore partly attributable to the active role of the Church. Added to this, the lack of modern agricultural inputs and of education, sanitation and total neglect by recent governments have resulted in a weak but near subsistence level of rural economy. This is characterised by a chronic shortage of food and a lack of essential commodities.

Cultivation usually revolves around a yearly harvest of cereal — wheat sorghum, millet, 'teff' (a kind of millet), beans, lentils, etc. Obsolete farming techniques and bad soil management are employed year after year. 'Teff' is widely cultivated, mostly for urban consumption (cash crop), but is far from economical. Far more land, time and labour is wasted than is available. Vegetables and fruits are unknown to most of the peasant population. Meat is rarely eaten, due to poverty and the numerous fasting holidays. Most of the food therefore lacks protein and vitamins. But one would have hoped that most of these problems would have
disappeared after the fall of the old regime and the radical land proclamation. Where has it gone wrong to end up ‘with a fall of 25 per cent to 35 per cent in the amount of grain available for each non-peasant’?

In 1974 Emperor Haile Selassie’s government was overthrown by a massive uprising of the peoples of Ethiopia. But this suddenly left a power vacuum in which, after a lot of intrigues and bloodshed, the younger military officers managed to consolidate power.

The people were demanding swift radical and democratic changes. Peasants took their own actions. The military junta, which was in disarray, was then quick enough to take guidance from the peasants and responded to the popular demands and actions already taken independently by echoing, legalising and snatching most of the gains of the revolution into its own hands. This, however, left the rest of the participants in the cold. It declared itself a provisional military government, which it still is, after eight years! Since then it has forged an alliance with the USSR to obtain US$2bn worth of arms, which makes it one of the top ranking spenders on arms per capita in the world. Everything has been geared to wage war. A replica of the Soviet Red Army was set up in a few months. Forced conscription and extensive training of peasant militia meant that the number of troops rose very sharply from 50,000 to 300,000, including 10,000 well-trained airforce personnel in less than two years — to make it the strongest army in black Africa. (The Guardian 14/3/81). The introduction of 2½ years of military service for men between the ages 18-30 is a clear manifestation of the junta’s obsession with the civil war (The Times 6/5/83, Summary of World Broadcasts, BBC 3/5/83).

Prior to the recent military build-up, the human cost of the civil wars in the northern section alone was massive. The official Ethiopian figures were 13,000 killed, 33,000 wounded, 6,500 Ethiopian prisoners of war, 250,000 refugees in Sudan, and more than 500,000 displaced were also reported within Eritrea (The Guardian, 12/8/78).

Since July 1978, six major offensives, each involving up to 100,000 troops, have been undertaken. All of these have failed, leaving more and more people in unbearable suffering. Two or three times each year, more people are killed or displaced, which has led to the total disruption of community life. Obsessive determination to bring about a military solution has had tragic consequences (The Observer, 17/12/81).

In the 1980 September-October offensive alone, heavy aerial bombardment, plus constant movement of hungry and demoralised infantry, tanks, and heavy-duty trucks left most land barren. Crops, houses and villages were deliberately burnt or destroyed. Many farms were left uncultivated or unattended, only to rot under heavy weed and pests. According to REST (The Relief Society of Tigray) such a nightmare left 200,000 people victim to hunger and starvation in Tigray alone. Of these, 80,000 were displaced, many thousands killed, and more than 2,000 houses, 6,000 tons of grain, and many schools, churches, mosques and grinding mills were destroyed. The destructive impact of each offensive on the economic and human resources has been colossal too.

The outcome of the sixth offensive of February to May 1982 was even more devastating. It is believed that Eritrean guerillas lost some 4,000 men, killed or wounded, while the Ethiopian killed and wounded were well over 30,000 — a
third of the 100,000 troops that tried in vain to break the guerrillas' strongholds. Ethiopian losses of equipment and widespread shortage of staple food because of the 'operation red star' were very considerable too.

As a result, the living standards of people in the urban areas have rapidly and seriously gone from bad to worse. The input into the agricultural and industrial sectors has been negligible. Unemployment and prostitution have reached an all-time record. Moreover, house construction is not keeping up with the soaring demand.

The pressure on the peasants is equally disastrous. They have been obliged to bring forward more of their products at barely the cost of production. In return, they are asked to put up with the irregular and expensive supplies of essential commodities — such as salt, clothing and medicine. This has led to reluctant peasant and workers' co-operation, urban and peasant resistance in some parts, more so in the impoverished northern province of Tigray. The frustration of the 'military option' led to repeated emergency calls, intimidating proclamations, widespread executions, mass arrests of students, trade unionists, elites, religious leaders and senior technocrats/politicians under a 'red terror' campaign of 1977/1979. Thousands were forced to flee the country and many of those who have been abroad have refused to return.

This self-inflicted war situation is costing millions of lives of poor peasants. The economy of the rest of the country has been diverted to the civil war. Furthermore, forced contributions, forced and unpaid conscriptions of peasant militia, very low fixed wages and high rates of inflation, shortage of essential items and worsening communication facilities have left most state and small-scale farms either uncultivated or badly managed. In recent years (1981/82), government state farms have shown a rapid decline in food production, sometimes by as much as 25 per cent on previous years. Despite heavy political propaganda, the small peasants have been quick enough to realise that they are not getting a better deal. In effect, they have been withholding crops and infrequently visiting market places for fear of confiscation and forced conscription. Every year there are more and more plots uncultivated, as the morale of the peasants and the workers alike is getting steadily worse.

In the northern provinces, the ruthless measures of the military have even been worse than in the rest of the country. Fear of reprisals, forced conscriptions, constant air bombardments, troop harassments, looting and raping have forced many villages to be abandoned and many more farms burnt or left unattended. In some localities, locusts have been breeding fast and destroying any crops left behind. Poverty and undernourishment have been festering unchecked. As if the war was not enough, the drought of two successive years (1981-1982) has left these ailing and war-haunted peoples to fall victims to unprecedented famine. Currently more than three million — in four northern provinces — namely Eritrea, Gondar and Semen, Tigray and Wollo, are threatened (The Guardian, 10/4/83).

There is always some truth to the explanation given of drought causing famine; but it would be naive to treat rain shortage as more than a catalyst. If drought is the major cause of recent famines and the massive displacement of 500,000 refugees to the Sudan, why has Sudan, which has always had less rainfall and more inhospitable, arid lowlands, become the host of these displaced Ethiopians?
The 1983 May Day speech of Colonel Mengistu, which had a sympathetic hearing, gave compassionate lip-service to the drought-famine situation in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, instead of taking firm action to direct the human resources into production and revitalise the agricultural sector, which he himself admits has failed to satisfy the chronic food shortage, he has introduced the National Military Service Programme. This is obviously contrary to the needs of the weak and hungry population. The call of the entire working population to military service provides a plausible argument that is bound to fail. It has left many important and fundamental questions unanswered. Once more, civil unrest, food shortages, widespread terror, fear of military repercussions and forced conscriptions, are to be expected.

How are the workers in the towns to be motivated to co-operate or work harder when their wages have been frozen since 1975, while inflation has been soaring? In addition to one month’s salary contribution per year, why are the poor workers being asked to contribute to the endless calls of ‘the motherland’s obligations’? How have they benefited materially from the revolution? Or is it a campaign to recruit the unemployed young people, swelling up urban areas? How is it possible to train peasants who are already harassed and scared, or to feed the hungry urban dwellers if the peasants are uprooted in one way or the other?

Surely, they cannot be short of fighting men. The militarisation of the entire country without a solid economic foundation, to say the least, is not going to stop any social unrest. One must conclude that drought is not the major cause of the current famine, much as the military government wants to make a big political meal out of it. Backward religious culture, prolonged negligence, political arrogance, and a lack of concern to understand the social and cultural fabric, in addition to poor economic development, are the real causes.

Military suppression, no matter how ruthless and intimidating it be, has never solved or narrowed the depth of resentment. Indeed, it has, as always, increased the misery and aggravated the chronic food shortage, hunger, epidemics, etc., which are ‘unwelcome familiars’ constantly hovering at every peasant’s back door. The more the government steps up its military activity, the more people are displaced and the more the armed struggle grows and spreads rapidly. The civil war in Eritrea is still on after 22 years, has grown in strength in Tigray during the last six years, and may even spread soon to the southern provinces. The famine we are all familiar with has more complex roots in man-made rather than natural causes.

Araya Redda

Bibliographic Note
collection of papers on the earlier famines in Ethiopia. For the conflict in Eritrea, see B. Davidson et al. (Eds.) *Behind the War in Eritrea* (Spokesman, Nottingham, 1980), while its wider background was examined by B. Habte Selassie in his *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1980). An important recent text which analyses famine as a social rather than natural disaster is A. Sen, *Poverty & Famines: an Essay in Entitlement & Deprivation*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981), which also has a provocative chapter on the Ethiopian famine of 1974-75.

**NATIONAL SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS LUWERO DISTRICT, UGANDA, JANUARY-DECEMBER 1983**

In December 1980 Dr Milton Obote assumed the office of President of Uganda, having been deposed from the premiership eight years earlier by the military coup of Idi Amin. The intervening period of increasingly tyrannical government had left a potentially prosperous country in a state of total chaos. The formal economy and its infrastructure had collapsed, and government institutions at central and local level had practically ceased to function. Acts of political and criminal violence were endemic and virtually indistinguishable. Internationally, the country had lost all credibility, its recent past projecting a sinister image of tragedy and farce.

Within 18 months of taking office, President Obote and his Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC) government had begun to restore some semblance of normality to the country’s economy and administration. With internal reconstruction came external recognition, and President Obote progressively won the confidence of Western aid donors, neighbouring African states, and international lending agencies such as the IMF.

Despite this success, there remained one problem which the new government could not resolve — that of violence, lawlessness and political insecurity. The fragile nature of Uganda’s internal security derived from two related features of the political scene: the emergence of opposition groups pledged to oust the UPC government by force of arms and the absence of an effective national army to suppress those groups and to provide the military underpinning for a stable administration.

**Opposition Groups**

After his electoral victory in December 1980, President Obote and his government were challenged by three main armed opposition groups:

* in the West Nile province, bordering Zaire and Sudan — several guerrilla armies nominally loyal to former President Idi Amin, the most important being the United National Recovery Force (UNRF) under former Finance Minister Brigadier Moses Ali.

* in Kampala and operating to the east of the capital — the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) led by Andrew Kayira, a minister in the short-lived Lule government which succeeded Amin and member of the opposition Democratic Party’s militant, unconstitutional wing.
collection of papers on the earlier famines in Ethiopia. For the conflict in Eritrea, see B. Davidson et al. (Eds.) Behind the War in Eritrea (Spokesman, Nottingham, 1980), while its wider background was examined by B. Habte Selassie in his Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa, (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1980). An important recent text which analyses famine as a social rather than natural disaster is A. Sen, Poverty & Famines: an Essay in Entitlement & Deprivation, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981), which also has a provocative chapter on the Ethiopian famine of 1974-75.

NATIONAL SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS LUWERO DISTRICT, UGANDA, JANUARY-DECEMBER 1983

In December 1980 Dr Milton Obote assumed the office of President of Uganda, having been deposed from the premiership eight years earlier by the military coup of Idi Amin. The intervening period of increasingly tyrannical government had left a potentially prosperous country in a state of total chaos. The formal economy and its infrastructure had collapsed, and government institutions at central and local level had practically ceased to function. Acts of political and criminal violence were endemic and virtually indistinguishable. Internationally, the country had lost all credibility, its recent past projecting a sinister image of tragedy and farce.

Within 18 months of taking office, President Obote and his Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) government had begun to restore some semblance of normality to the country's economy and administration. With internal reconstruction came external recognition, and President Obote progressively won the confidence of Western aid donors, neighbouring African states, and international lending agencies such as the IMF.

Despite this success, there remained one problem which the new government could not resolve — that of violence, lawlessness and political insecurity. The fragile nature of Uganda's internal security derived from two related features of the political scene: the emergence of opposition groups pledged to oust the UPC government by force of arms and the absence of an effective national army to suppress those groups and to provide the military underpinning for a stable administration.

Opposition Groups
After his electoral victory in December 1980, President Obote and his government were challenged by three main armed opposition groups:

* in the West Nile province, bordering Zaire and Sudan — several guerrilla armies nominally loyal to former President Idi Amin, the most important being the United National Recovery Force (UNRF) under former Finance Minister Brigadier Moses Ali.

* in Kampala and operating to the east of the capital — the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) led by Andrew Kayira, a minister in the short-lived Lule government which succeeded Amin and member of the opposition Democratic Party's militant, unconstitutional wing.
in Kampala and the Luwero district north-west of the capital — the National Resistance Army (NRA) under the leadership of former Defence Minister Yoweri Museveni. The Uganda Patriotic Movement, Museveni’s political party, had been decisively defeated in the 1980 elections.

Lacking external backing and internal support, and incapable of co-ordinating their operations, the opposition groups were never likely to topple Obote or to pose as a credible alternative to the UPC government. Nevertheless, their potential for disruption and the prolongation of political instability was considerable. In the West Nile province, the UNRF was able to overrun the military garrison at Koboko and ransack the provincial capital of Arua. In Kampala itself two army barracks came under attack from the rebels, while gunmen in the suburbs terrorised the civilian population. Perhaps most seriously for the government, parts of Luwero and Mpiji districts just outside the capital came under the control of the NRA and insecure for members of the UPC and the official Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). This was the politically sensitive area inhabited by the Baganda, a relatively wealthy and educated group who had clashed violently with the first Obote government in an unsuccessful bid for autonomy. In the 1980 elections they had supported the Democratic Party, which at the beginning of 1982 had 44 parliamentary seats, compared to the UPCs 81.

The disruption and insecurity generated by the rebels’ activity had some important repercussions. It diverted the government’s attention from the pressing demands of economic and administrative reconstruction; it cast an international shadow over the legitimacy of the UPC; and most significantly it highlighted President Obote’s second principle problem, weakness and inefficiency of the UNLA.

The Uganda National Liberation Army

When the Tanzanian forces which had ousted the Amin government left Uganda in June 1981, they left behind a national army which was incapable of coping with the very difficult demands being placed upon it. Its weaknesses were many. In the lower ranks of the army morale was low, its soldiers practically unpaid and unprovided with food or accommodation. Regular members of the UNLA were untrained and undisciplined, a problem exacerbated by the tendency of officers to recruit individual soldiers and irregular militias on their own initiative. Officers were cut off from both their men and from the military administration, which was unable to provide the necessary logistical backing. The UNLA was dominated by members of Obote’s ethnic group, the Langi, and was largely independent of other state organisations. The President, many observers believed, was wary of interfering with the Chief of Staff, Brigadier General David Ojok.

President Obote’s whole strategy for the reconstruction of Uganda was, therefore, confronted with a major dilemma: how could the government’s authority be asserted and the rebels eliminated when the national army was unreliable and, to some extent, beyond political control? His response to this dilemma was to give the UNLA a considerable degree of freedom to take action against the guerrillas, but also to take measures that would strengthen the UNLA and supplement it with more specialised security units.
Strengthening the Security Forces
President Obote's efforts to strengthen and supplement the UNLA have taken a variety of forms. A number of officers have been dismissed for indiscipline, and steps have been taken to prevent any UNLA unit from being dominated by the members of any one ethnic group. Vigilantes have been recruited and trained to gather intelligence and thereby obstruct guerrilla operations at local level.

The major emphasis in Obote's policy has been to draw on the experience and expertise of foreign military advisors. A 36-man Commonwealth training force, including members of the British SAS, took up residence at the Jinja barracks in March 1982 and will remain until at least 1984. The Tanzanian army continues to play a part in artillery training. Britain and Canada have provided assistance with the training of an enlarged police force, and 30 North Korean instructors have been engaged in the training of an elite unit. In addition, a private British company, Falconstar, has been contracted to recruit and train a paramilitary Special Force.

Eliminating the Guerrillas
While implementing these measures to improve the security forces, the government allowed the UNLA, the police and paramilitary units to launch a campaign designed to eliminate the three main guerrilla groups. This campaign appears to have met with a considerable degree of success.

In the West Nile province, the UNRF has collapsed. Lacking ammunition and recruits, it no longer controls any territory. Kampala is now relatively quiet and secure, and the UFM leader Andrew Kayira is reported to have left the country. In the Luwero area the NRA has been under intense pressure from government forces and North Korean artillery instructors since the end of 1982. The rebel guerrilla bands in the area have been disbanded and claim to be regrouping elsewhere, allowing the UNLA to open the main roads through Luwero and to cut back roadside grass, thereby preventing isolated ambushes. The leadership of the NRA is said to be divided, and its founder, Yoweri Museveni, has lost the support which he once enjoyed within sections of the UNLA.

As far as its own security is concerned, the Ugandan government has made significant advances in the three years since it came to power. The war against the guerrillas has been won, however, at the expense of immense human suffering and the persistent violation of human rights. The elimination of the rebel elements owed little to any new-found discipline within a retrained UNLA and a great deal to indiscriminate violence inflicted on the government's real and imagined opponents by uncontrolled units of the security forces and militant members of the ruling UPC. Supplementing their meagre income by looting and theft, settling old scores by intimidation and murder, the soldiers and party activists have created as much insecurity as the rebels fighting the government. Indeed, because of the easy availability of weapons and military uniforms in Uganda and the persistently high level of violent crime in the country, it has often been impossible to distinguish the actions of civilian criminals, rebel guerrillas and the government's security services.

Human Rights and Population Displacements
The human repercussions of the drive for national (i.e. governmental) security have been tragic. Firstly, as Amnesty International has reported at length,
Uganda's long suffering citizens have been subjected to gross violations of their human rights. Arbitrary arrests and abductions, detention without trial, murder and torture during detention have taken place, unacknowledged and uninvestigated by the authorities.

Secondly, such abuses have forced a large number of Ugandans to flee their country. The exodus of refugees from the West Nile province and from the south-west border with Rwanda give particular cause for concern.

**The West Nile Province**

Up to 300,000 Ugandan refugees are believed to have fled from the West Nile province into the neighbouring states of Sudan and Zaire as a result of UNLA's efforts to 'liberate' the area from rebel guerrillas. In October 1982 more than 100 refugees a day were registering at transit centres in southern Sudan. In August 1983 a daily figure of between 400 and 1,200 were reported.

These refugees are, in the words of one eye-witness, 'the totally unpoliticised victims of undisciplined, unpaid and vindictive soldiery'. On the pretext of flushing out guerrillas in the area that was once Amin's stronghold point, units of the UNLA have been launching 'search and destroy' operations, both in West Nile and across the Sudanese border. Parts of the province have been denuded of people and animals following a spate of raids which saw UNLA soldiers engaged in looting, theft and atrocities against women and children. One deserter from the army has claimed that soldiers were advised to kill every civilian in the province. An exaggeration perhaps, but one that has gained some credence in view of President Obote's publicised statement that the province should be turned into a game reserve.

Even for those Ugandans who have left their country, life remains precarious. An estimated 40,000 refugees are living in settlements in Zaire, where shortages of food and drugs have led to high mortality rates. The refugee exodus has placed a heavy burden on the slender resources of the Sudanese government, and aid agencies operating in the area were unable to respond in time to the influx. Several attempts by the refugees to publicise their plight and counter official claims that they are supporters of Amin have failed to attract the attention of the international community.

**The South-West Border**

The Ugandan government appears to have an even more direct responsibility for the displacement of people on the south-west border with Rwanda, an area which has been unaffected by the activities of rebel guerrillas. In the south-west there live many 'people of Rwandan origin', some of them Rwandan citizens who left their country during the ethnic disturbances of 1959-1973, other Ugandans who are members of ethnic groups divided by the Rwanda-Uganda border during the period of colonial partition. Local prejudice against the 'Rwandans', many of whom are successful cattle farmers, has often been exploited by Ugandan politicians, not least by Milton Obote. In 1969 during his first period in power, Obote ordered the registration of Rwandan refugees, a move which generated fears of expulsion amongst those who had settled in Uganda and which gave them cause to welcome the Amin coup of 1972. On his return to the Ugandan political arena, Obote and others ensured that the Rwandans, largely supporters of the Democratic Party, were not allowed to vote.
After coming to power the anti-Rwandan elements within the ruling UPC made their intentions more explicit. Allegations of cattle rustling and other illegal activities were levelled at the Rwandans, and in the first quarter of 1982 plans were drawn up to force everyone of Rwandan origin into the refugee camps established for exiled Rwandans in the 1960s. This plan was never implemented, but in October 1982, when President Obote was out of the country, UPC officials and youth wing members used some minor disturbances in the south-west as a pretext for the wholesale expulsion of the Rwandan population. Assisted by the security forces, UPC activists attacked the Rwandans, their homes and property, forcing them to flee without food or water.

At least 30,000 displaced people crowded into the area's established refugee settlements where they were confronted with primitive living conditions and continued harassment by party officials and security police. A similar number crossed the border into Rwanda. By November 1982 the influx into the densely populated country was so great that Rwandan authorities closed the border with Uganda.
The Ugandan government expressed concern over the 'regrettable incidents' and 'local misunderstandings' which gave rise to these displacements, but insisted that it was 'in no way responsible for what happened, nor does it condone the actions of few (sic) individuals — who incidentally were not all UPC supporters as widely reported'. Nevertheless, it has done little to regain the confidence of the people of Rwandan origin. Under the terms of two separate agreements reached with the assistance of the United Nations, the Ugandan and Rwandan governments pledged to introduce a screening and registration process to establish the citizenship of the displaced people on both sides of the border. Recent reports suggest that the Ugandan government has adopted unnecessarily cumbersome administrative procedures to perform this task, and that it has imposed unrealistically stringent conditions on those claiming Ugandan citizenship. As a result, it appears likely that a substantial number of the displaced people will be declared stateless. While the screening and registration process continues, up to 20,000 displaced people and 30,000 cattle currently in south-west Uganda are being moved 150 miles to the north to new temporary camps. The first group set off on the three-week journey at the beginning of September 1983.

Internal Displacements: the Luwero Triangle

In addition to the abuse of human rights and the displacement of Ugandan citizens abroad, the government’s efforts to tighten national security have also led to a large scale displacement of people within the 'Luwero Triangle'. This is a 700 sq km area north-west of Kampala between the main roads to Bombo and Hoima, a prosperous coffee growing area with 600,000 inhabitants, most of them Baganda.

The Ugandan government has been extremely sensitive about news coverage of the situation in Luwero, ordering aid workers to remain silent about conditions there and accusing foreign journalists of organising a 'campaign of distortion' on the subject. Despite the official news blackout, enough evidence can be gleaned from diplomatic sources, press reports and eye-witness accounts to provide a description of events in Luwero in the first nine months of 1983.

From the beginning of 1982, guerrilla activity by the NRA made much of the Luwero Triangle effectively out of bounds for members of the UPC and UNLA. The main roads in the area fell into disuse, and the Bombo barracks came under attack from rebel forces. At the end of the year the UNLA initiated a major campaign to retake the triangle and establish the government’s authority in the area. In the course of its sweeps through the triangle the UNLA took control of the strategic trading centre villages, rounded up civilians attempting to flee from the fighting and evicted those who remained in their homes. The people of Luwero were then transferred to ‘protected’ camps guarded by UNLA soldiers, leaving other units free to take action against any guerrillas who remained in the area.

Reliable reports indicate that approximately 120,000 people have been confined in up to 36 camps, 19 in Luwero district and the remainder in Mpigi, Mukono and Mubende districts. The size of the camps varies considerably, the smallest having around 100 inhabitants and the largest almost 20,000. Given this variation it is difficult to make broad generalisations about the character and condition of the camps. Nevertheless, there are sufficient uniformities for some overall
Military Control
Despite claims by the Ugandan Vice-President that the inhabitants of the camps are free to come and go as they please, it is clear that they are in fact subject to very rigorous military controls. The triangle has been placed under the direct authority of the Minister of Defence and the President’s office. All movement in and out of the area is controlled by the army and although civilian officials continue to operate locally, they have little authority. The displaced people detained in the camps are only allowed out during the day to collect food and coffee, and even those evacuated to hospital are expected to return to their camp after receiving treatment. Anyone found leaving the camps without authority has been assumed to be a guerrilla and dealt with accordingly. As a result of these controls, much of the triangle has been turned into what one observer describes as a ‘desolate wasteland’.

Military Abuses
The confinement of Luwero’s inhabitants in guarded camps might conceivably be justified in terms of the government’s overriding need to suppress the rebel guerrillas (although the government’s comparison of the situation in Luwero with that in Northern Ireland is less than helpful). What cannot be justified are the well documented instances of military abuse that have taken place in the camps.

At best, the UNLA soldiers operating in Luwero are reported to act in an unnecessarily aggressive and high-handed manner, their behaviour often influenced by an excess of alcohol. At worst, under cover of darkness when expatriate aid workers have returned to Kampala, the soldiers are known to have been responsible for abductions, disappearances, murder and multiple rape. Not surprisingly the camp dwellers live in terror of their guards and were said by one independent journal in Uganda to have been turned into ‘zombies’ by the army’s excesses.

The abuses committed by the military are not simply examples of irrational brutality. In the way of the Luwero displacements, the army seized the opportunity to loot abandoned homes and buildings and to collect the valuable stores of coffee beans left behind by farmers and traders. This form of exploitation has continued since the establishment of the camps. Food, clothing and blankets have been stolen from relief lorries, and the camp dwellers have been forced at gunpoint to collect further supplies of coffee. Who sells this coffee and receives payment for it remains obscure.

Despite the government’s claims that the camps are ‘protective’ in nature, it is evident that the UNLA has failed to protect the people of Luwero, either from its own soldiers or from the ‘bandits’ which are said to be active in the area. At the end of May 1983, two Ugandan newspapers reported that up to 200 people, many of them women and children, had been killed at the Kikyusa camp 40 miles north of Kampala. Another 50 people are said to have been killed near the larger camp at Masulita, and a further 35 killed and 20 wounded in an attack on a bus in Luwero. Responsibility for these atrocities is difficult to pin down. The NRA has denied any role in the attacks, and some people leaving Uganda have alleged that the Kikyusa massacre was the work of UPC youth wing members travelling in
Living Conditions
Even for those displaced people in Luwero whose existence has not been cut short by army or guerrilla atrocities, life in the detention camps is nasty and brutish. Housing conditions are primitive. At some camps, such as those at Masulita and Nakaseke, the displaced people are squatting in derelict buildings, abandoned schools, coffee sheds and civil administration offices. Elsewhere, at Ndeje and Kapeka for example, large numbers are being housed in huts made of banana leaves or mud and straw. Such structures are invariably overcrowded.

Food and water supplies for the camp dwellers are, not surprisingly, inadequate. Luwero enjoys abundant rainfall but the boreholes near the camps are unreliable and have broken down, forcing the people to use dirty water collected from pools some distance from their temporary homes. Similarly, the fertility of the land in this part of Uganda has not prevented food shortages from occurring. Basic rations are collected by the camp dwellers themselves, walking out to the abandoned shambas during the day in search of crops such as cassava, green bananas, sweet potatoes, maize and millet. In at least one camp only cassava and green bananas have been available, local supplies of other crops being exhausted both by the people of Luwero and the large number of soldiers stationed in the area.

Relief supplies cannot fully compensate for these shortages, and the distribution of the available supplies has been hindered by delays at military roadblocks, the general lack of information about the location and size of the camps, and by the government’s insistence that relief workers stay out of the Luwero area overnight. As a result of such obstructions, between 10 and 35 per cent of the children living in the camps are suffering from malnutrition of varying degrees.

In addition to the shortage of food, camp dwellers are debilitated by inadequate supplies of soap and clean clothing, poor housing conditions, a lack of recreational facilities and the constant need to search for food and firewood. Given such conditions, the incidence of disease is predictably high. Outbreaks of whooping cough, diarrhoea and malaria have been reported, and in May a measles epidemic at the Ndeje camp killed up to 250 people. Local medical services, shattered by the army’s operations, do not have the vehicles, drugs and other supplies required to deal with an emergency such as this. Again, an already difficult situation has been exacerbated by the obstructive behaviour of the soldiers, who on one occasion beat up and arrested a mobile health team operating in the area.

International Responses
The worst effects of the displacements in the Luwero triangle have been mitigated by the efforts of Ugandan and international voluntary agencies, intergovernmental organisations, foreign diplomats and governments.

The Ugandan Red Cross has launched what it describes as its ‘biggest relief operation ever’. With the assistance of donations from 10 other Red Cross societies and the Canadian government, it has provided food, medicine, registration and tracing services. The United Nations Children’s Fund has launched a £60,000 emergency programme to finance the provision of food,
water, medicine and immunisation facilities. Oxfam and the Save the Children Fund have been operating a joint relief programme and participate in the weekly consultative meetings at which the agencies co-ordinate their activities.

While these efforts have provided some immediate relief to the displaced people, Commonwealth governments and their diplomatic representatives have also been working behind the scenes in a co-ordinated attempt to end the abuses and atrocities taking place in Luwero. Some of the camps have been visited by members of the British, Australian and Canadian High Commissions, and by the American Ambassador. The Canadian government has requested that aid agencies should be given full access to the camps, while the Australian government has said that its continued participation in the Commonwealth military training programme is conditional upon 'immediate progress in human rights and army discipline'. In July the British Foreign Office Minister, Malcolm Rifkind, visited Uganda and made specific reference to human rights violations in Luwero. He impressed upon President Obote his grave concern at conditions in the camps.

The Ugandan Government's Response
Prompted by pressure from the country's major aid donors and by the growing number of press reports about the situation in Luwero, the Ugandan government has gradually changed the tone and content of its public statements regarding the displacements.

In April 1983 the government was still reluctant to make any admission about what was taking place in Luwero. By the beginning of June it was claiming that the area had been cleared of guerrillas and that anyone displaced by the army's operations were now free to return to their homes and villages. In July President Obote spoke on Radio Uganda denying press reports about the existence of 'detention camps'. The only displaced people in Luwero, he said, had voluntarily taken refuge around missions, police posts and schools. The following month Vice-President Paulo Muwanga told the Uganda parliament that most of the people who had sought refuge in this way had now returned to their homes.

In September 1983 the government made a major shift in policy, apparently to fend off diplomatic pressures and to attract badly needed international assistance. President Obote admitted that 70,000 people were living in 36 'relief centres' in Luwero, and launched an appeal for aid to assist them. He denied that the army had been responsible for the displacements. In a rather ambiguous statement the President suggested that it was necessary to keep people in the camps 'to prepare their minds and give them the necessary inputs to enable them to return to their homes'.

Five days after the appeal for aid had been launched a British national, Deputy Commissioner of Prisons William Kirkham, was appointed chief relief administrator for the Luwero triangle. The government announced that he would receive aid donations, take full responsibility for the distribution of relief food and plan the resettlement of the displaced population. Obote once again refuted allegations about human rights violations in the camps and invited aid donors to send observers to witness the relief effort. In October the International Red Cross, which had been asked to leave Uganda in 1982, was invited back to examine the situation in Luwero.
The Future?
President Obote's decision to acknowledge publicly the scale of human suffering in Luwero would appear to represent an important turning point in this episode of Uganda's troubled recent history. It is appropriate, therefore, to ask some pertinent questions about the future relationship between national security, human rights and population displacements in the country.

Firstly, has the use of displacement and confinement as a means of tightening national security been fully abandoned? Although observers have now been invited into the Luwero triangle, military operations are reported to be continuing west of the Hoima road and north-east of Luwero town. Little information about the nature of these operations is available, and it remains to be seen whether the 'Luwero solution' will be repeated in these areas.

Secondly, the fate of those people displaced in the Luwero triangle is yet to be resolved. While the UNLA remains beyond political control, they will be reluctant to believe that their safety is guaranteed. When they do return to their homes, they face the difficult task of rebuilding their houses and farms, often without capital resources. Clearly there is a role to be played here by international agencies and foreign governments, who might use any assistance provided as a means of monitoring the preservation of human rights in the area.

Finally, the recent events in Luwero illuminate the government's pressing need to reconcile the sometimes conflicting demands of short-term security and long-term stability. Even if the guerrillas are eliminated and the UNLA is brought under control (and these tasks are difficult enough), President Obote will still have to reckon with the alienated population of Buganda, 30 per cent of the country's most articulate and politically sophisticated citizens. Whether their aspirations can be met in a parliamentary system dominated by the ruling UPC is a question that might even tax President Obote's political acumen.

Jeff Crisp

Bibliographic Note
This briefing is based on confidential reports received from Uganda and on the following published sources:


**OUTWRITE**

Women’s newspaper

FOR NEWS FROM WOMEN WORLDWIDE

Women are organising against oppression internationally. How much do we know of each others’ struggles? Are we worlds apart?

*OUTWRITE*, a newspaper by and about women, aims to build links and solidarity between women worldwide.

Each month *OUTWRITE* presents news and features on women’s achievements and struggles for women’s liberation......against racism, imperialism, male violence, discrimination,lesbian oppression, for control over our bodies............and much more!

*Keep in touch with the women’s movement worldwide!*

Send now for free issue and subscription details to: *Outwrite Women’s Newspaper, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2. Tel. 01 729 4575.*
Debate

FEMINISM IN AFRICA: FEMINISM AND AFRICA

The articles in this issue are not the first in ROAPE to be addressed directly to the issue of gender and women's struggles in Africa. Nevertheless, coverage has at best been occasional and until now no opportunity has been taken to reflect on the impact that feminist analysis has had upon the debates current at the time when ROAPE was founded. Nor has there been any reflection upon the similarities and differences between women's demands in the west, the nature of which have been implicit in some of the articles which have been published, and the struggles and demands of women in Africa. The feminist movement in the west has been accused of racism, that is to say that it has failed to recognise the different historical experience of black women compared to that of white women and has been aggressive towards their cultural values and struggles for freedom as black women.

In this paper I want to illustrate some features of the development of socialist feminist analysis in order to illustrate what I believe to be some of the difficult questions confronting feminist politics and the relationship between feminism and socialism at an international level at the present moment. In brief, the socialist feminist critique over the last decade or more has shifted debates on, for example, the process of proletarianisation, from positions which ignored the question of sexual divisions and gender inequality to ones which represented women's subordination as the consequences of capitalism. Gradually it has shifted debates to recognise the specificity of gender relations — of women's subordination to men — and their interaction with modes of production. These relations have, for example, affected the structure of capitalist intervention in Africa. This shift has taken place long after African women themselves recognised that their subordination to men was not the effect of capitalism alone. But contemporary women's movements in Africa have been formed during recent or continuing struggles for national liberation which has shaped their reflection on the subordination of women in past and contemporary social formations and the priorities of struggle.

The main task of socialist feminism has been to conceptualise gender divisions as a set of social relations which have historically and in all known cultures been based on the domination of men and the subordination of women. Gender relations, it is argued, are distinct from those of class in capitalist or non-capitalist societies. They are, however, embedded in the social relations of production and reproduction such that the subordination of women serves the
interests of, say, capitalism as well as those of men. This conceptualisation of
gender relations has been the basis of the critique of Marxist theories of
imperialism, development and underdevelopment. These had been generally
devoid of any questions concerning the relationship between the development of
capitalism in Africa and the deepening of gender divisions and women's
subordination which already existed in the pre-capitalist social formations.

The consequence of this analysis has been to challenge many of the major
premises of the body of theory with which socialists have worked. This challenge
was not powerful enough at the time when ROAPE was founded to have been
reflected in its first editorial which committed the journal to a Marxist
perspective upon the analysis of imperialism and class struggle in Africa. But the
contribution of feminist analysis to many of the major issues with which ROAPE
has been concerned has gradually (if not consistently) informed the content of its
debates and reflected various stages in the development of the feminist critique.

In the early 1970s, the attempt to develop a socialist feminist analysis of the
relationship between capital and gender relations in the periphery confronted
work which was devoid of reference to sexual divisions, let alone gender
inequality. Consider, for example, Saul's contribution in ROAPE 1 (1975) to the
debate on the peasantry and class alliances.* Saul argued that the class actions of
some African peasants were restricted because their 'ultimate security and
subsistence rests upon maintaining rights in land and rights in family labour'
(p.46). From a feminist perspective, these peasants seemed to be no more than
male peasants. In many (if not most) societies in Africa, few women had either
individual or collective rights in land to maintain except access conditional upon
becoming and remaining wives. 'Family labour', however, glossed over the very
different rights a man might have in wives and in other kin and the methods by
which control over wives' labour might be secured. Moreover, Saul apparently
attributed the existence and exercise of such 'rights' to the survival of 'important
vestiges of pre-capitalist social networks and cultural pre-occupation' (p.49).
Feminist analysis sought to conceptualise these 'rights' that men possessed in
women as gender relations through which men controlled women's productive
and reproductive labour. Further, we argued that the social relations of
producers to capital transformed, and was transformed by, these gender
relations. This meant that, far from being a vestige of pre-capitalist social
networks, women's subordination was further secured in peasant households
producing for capitalist markets.

The feminist debate first sought to establish the reasons why capitalism
increased the subordination of women in the non-capitalist sectors: in other
words, the relationship between capital and women's labour. It was argued, for
example, that the intensification of female labour in peasant economies released
male labour for the production of cash crops. In the labour reserve areas capital
'used' women's productive and reproductive labour to ensure a supply of cheap
male migrant labour to the capitalist sectors. Their productive labour was
intensified to ensure the subsistence basis of labour reserve areas while their
reproductive labour ensured the maintenance and reproduction of labour power
at no cost to the capitalist wage.

*In naming contributors, it is not my intention to accuse them particularly of the crime of
gender blindness but to illustrate the general perspective which their work represented.
This argument was used in *ROAPE* 7 by Innes and O'Meara in relation to class formation in the Transkei. They focused on the fact that the class divisions between the peasantry and the proletariat and semi-proletariat were also divisions between women and men. The consciousness of male — and some female — migrant labour was formed in the site of capitalist production. Yet the majority of women experienced their ‘double oppression’ at the site of the reproduction of labour power in the reserves. The political and ideological practices that might ensue, they argued, would differ: while men might struggle against capital at the point of production, women might be — and indeed had been — involved in mass popular resistance against the black collaborator class of chiefs and headmen in the reserves. This ‘structural division at the heart of the proletariat’ might affect the alliances it could forge and its willingness to organise as a class against capital (p.82). They concluded, however, that these divisions might be overcome through the common features of both urban and rural experience of capitalist exploitation which was ‘*the white man and his oppressive system of apartheid*’ (p.83, original emphases).

These arguments clarifying the relationship between capitalism and women’s labour, however, tended to evade the question of women’s subordination to men in both pre-capitalist and capitalist social formations. Innes and O'Meara did so in more ways than one, of which two may be mentioned here. First, they used the term ‘double oppression’ to mean that women were ‘chained to capital in a dual sense’ (p.82) and not, as the term has subsequently been more frequently used, to mean that women are ‘doubly oppressed’ through gender relations and by capital. In their argument, the sexual division of labour in the pre-capitalist household did not account for the subsequent oppression of women under capitalism (p.72). They conceived of the sexual division of labour as an arbitrary allocation of tasks, rather than a reflection of social relations of gender. The sexual division of labour was, therefore, merely subject to manipulation by capital rather than possessing any autonomous base from which to reproduce itself under capital. In neither social formation were (black) women oppressed by (black) men.

Secondly, they appear to have assumed that proletarianisation was the same experience for the small number of women as for the large majority of men. There were, therefore, no divisions between male and female *workers* despite the divisions within the ‘proletarian household’ reproducing male labour for capital. But the site of production of the majority of women wage workers in South Africa is the white household where they are employed as domestic labour, a site of consciousness very different from that of the majority of men (and which men have been more successful in escaping). As domestic labourers, they are more likely to feel (and be) oppressed by white women as by white men (though it is unclear whether Innes and O'Meara were being inadvertently sexist). The consequences of this very different experience of proletarianisation has been described by Jacklyn Cock in *ROAPE* 21 and by Gaitskell *et al* in this issue. Oppressed by capitalism and by racism, women’s experience as wage workers and as black workers has nevertheless been different from that of men.

This, then, poses the question of women’s relationship to men and not merely of women’s relationship to capital. What social processes ensured that women should remain in the reserves or be located in different forms of wage labour from men? The restriction of the vast majority of women to South Africa’s labour
reserves and, during the colonial period, to the labour reserves and peasant commodity producing sectors in the rest of Africa was partly achieved by the institution of state controls over their movements and by the lack of wage employment for women: the effect of state and capital's restructuring of gender relations. However, the means by which such controls were exercised were often realised through the existing structures of male control over women's mobility. Sam Jackson's article in ROAPE 13 illustrated the restrictions (and freedom) upon entering wage work placed upon secluded Hausa women in Northern Nigeria.

In relation to issues such as these, it has been necessary to conceptualise the structures and practices through which men control women's productive and reproductive labour in non-capitalist social formations. It was to this that Bernstein rather obscurely alluded in ROAPE 10 as the 'acquisition of more specialised elements of reproduction' (i.e. women) 'realised through commodity relations, for example, the monetisation of the bride price' (p.63). In his article in ROAPE 21 however, the 'relations and practices of ... gender differences led him to specify more clearly that women were doubly oppressed' by gender and by the development of peasant commodity production (p.50). Bernstein attributed these gender difficulties to the 'persistence of pre-capitalist relations and practices' which, amongst others, inhibit the further commoditisation of land and labour power (p.51).

The mode of recruiting women's labour to the peasant household is primarily that of marriage which secures (under various conditions and to different degrees) a wife's productive labour and her domestic and sexual services. The material advantages to men of securing women's labour through marriage have been debated widely in relation to the reproduction of the household in pre-capitalist social formations and to its reproduction under peasant commodity relations. It is usually argued that commodity relations intensify gender divisions and women's subordination starkly revealing, as it were, wives' lack of ownership of the means of production yet their existence as unfree labour. Their quality as unfree labour, it has been argued, becomes increasingly important as commodity relations destroy the bonds securing other non-free labour to the peasant household. For example, the commoditisation of land and labour power has enabled successive generations of sons of Yoruba cocoa farmers to enter into wage labour or establish enterprises independently of their fathers. The withdrawal of male domestic labour has led to a much higher dependence upon female productive as well as reproductive labour. The resulting 'sexual politics of labour' involving a struggle between wives and husbands over the sexual designation of tasks and the period of a wife's working life for her husband's enterprises has been described elsewhere (Roberts, 1984).

Commodity relations, however, also provide the objective conditions by which wives also may ultimately escape their existence as unfree labour were it not for the social forces of gender subordination. Consequently, as Bernstein suggests, control over women may become a struggle between 'capital' and male household heads. The latter may exert their control, as the following example graphically illustrates, through the enforcement of marriage as a mechanism for resecuring women's labour.

In the Western Region of Ghana in the early 1930s, the revival of gold-mining offered women the opportunity to abandon domestic services to husbands and
their labour on male owned cocoa farms to trade in foodstuffs and other commodities to the male migrant labourers in the camps surrounding the mines. The loss of women’s labour to the cocoa economy (at a time when cocoa prices were severely depressed) was so serious as to lead the omanhene to proclaim that all such ‘free women’ were to be arrested and confined until their husbands reclaimed them or until a man took one as a wife for the sum of 7/6, an amount constituting both a bride price for a ‘second hand woman’ and a fee for their release.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, under circumstances when the separation between husbands and wives is not enforced through oppressive practices such as those of apartheid, women should regard the petty commodity sector or wage labour itself as a means of escape. The prior existence of gender subordination has meant, however, that the process of female proletarianisation has been slower than that of men and has taken on a qualitatively different form. Bryceson’s article in ROAPE 17 considerably advanced our perception of this process. Unlike that of male peasants, female proletarianisation in Tanzania does not involve separation or dispossession from the means of production since women had neither possession nor control as pre-capitalist producers or as peasant farmers. Essentially, she argued ‘in the process of female proletarianisation in Tanzania women have struggled against pre-capitalist male control over their labour’ (p.9).

While proletarianisation releases women’s productive labour from the control of men to exploitation by capital, this process has never been completed. The historical reasons for this remain contested in Britain (in what is known as ‘the family wage debate’) but several lines of argument appear to be relevant to the different historical experience of capitalist development and female proletarianisation in Africa — about which we still know much too little.

The first of these concerns the methods by and degrees to which men retain control over individual women as unpaid domestic labour, sexual ‘partners’ and bearers and rearers of their children — the ‘relations of human reproduction’. The second concerns the ways in which capital organises and organises itself around these conditions and the third is the way in which the state may (or may not) intervene to modify them.

It is still a matter of much debate within feminist analysis to explain whether, or perhaps how, male control of the relations of human reproduction is to be explained in terms of men’s material interests or lies purely in the realm of ideology — a distinction difficult to make whatever theory of ideology one espouses since in the context of control over women, material interests are invariably heavily disguised as the natural and inevitable relations between women and men. For example, Leitner (in ROAPE 6) can account for the fact that Kenyan women agricultural workers earn 40-50 per cent less than their male colleagues in terms of the advantages employers gain in reduced wage costs by maintaining a sexual division of labour in tasks. But she had to resort to (borrowed) ideology or the failure of proletarian consciousness to account for the reasons why neither male workers nor the Union had done anything to improve the discriminatory rates paid to ‘their wives’: ‘As domination patterns of the so-called modern society extend far into the workers’ families, the men like to think of themselves as the ones who have to earn enough to maintain their families . . .’ (p.40). She goes on to point out that the Union was riddled with sexism, quoting a
document stating that 'a job, like freedom or a wife is a birth-right of every citizen' (p.41, original emphasis). Yet clearly the maintenance of gender discrimination in wages can be explained as one of the many methods collectively available to men for securing women's continued dependence despite proletarianisation upon a 'male wage'.

When women do gain access to a living wage by selling their labour to capital (or by supporting themselves through petty commodity production), the restructuring of conjugal relations, usually realised through state intervention, to retain male control over women's reproductive services (and sometimes over their wages) can appear and may be suddenly more contradictory and more oppressive than their subordination under pre- or non-capitalist gender relations. Thus Bryceson and others have pointed out that laws which give husbands the right to control a wife's wages, or that give women fewer rights of custody over their own children in marriage than outside it, or that condone wife beating, are some features of the experience of sexual oppression which lead to high rates of divorce, or simply women's rejection of marriage or remarriage. Inevitably, however, whether women 'escape' or not from the gender discrimination and sexual violence within the proletarianised household, they are exposed to sexual harassment and exploitation outside it. In South Africa (and, of course, elsewhere including Britain) sexual exploitation is also part of racist oppression.

The question of violence and, more generally, the way in which male power over women is maintained has led feminism in the west to analyse the cultural ideologies of gender difference which support it. We know that sexual identity — concepts of masculinity and femininity — are culturally produced and culturally specific. They are, however, so deeply embedded in our lived experience that, in Gramsci's words, they constitute the limits and substance of common sense. They are the most difficult to challenge and change because they appear to be the most natural of all 'human' attributes. Feminist historians have shown how the sexual division of labour in production, for example, has been historically specific however much it is represented at any given moment as a division based on the 'natural attributes' of women and men. Black feminists have shown that the 'natural attributes' of black women have historically been considered different from those of white, placing black women in multi-racial societies in a specific and subordinate position in the gender hierarchy.

The historical forms of the sexual division of labour in production, however, appear more transient and more vulnerable to revolutionary change than the relations of human reproduction. Within these relations — which feminist socialists argue constitute the basis of gender divisions — the cultural properties of sexual identity are intimately constructed on the basis of male authority and women's subordination. The sexual identities of white women and white men in western societies have been predicated on the assumption of male dominance and of male control of female sexuality. These assumptions pervade all social institutions such as science, the law, education and state provision of family services. The feminist critique of sex-gender identities constitutes a critique of culture itself (though often abused as an hysterical attack upon nature).

The feminist critique of sex/gender identities — of the relations of human reproduction — has a longer (and lost) history than that of the contemporary women's movement. It has also been that aspect of feminist socialism which has been most silenced in socialist debate and in socialist transformation. Yet it is the
central core of the argument. Women's subordination is not the effect of pre-capitalist or capitalist modes of production but of gender relations themselves. Around these a separate struggle is required for the solutions which socialism historically and internationally has proposed have been far from adequate. Socialist societies have sought to rid themselves of gender inequality by the abolition of private property, by legislation and by exhortation. These have not succeeded in confronting women's daily experience of subordination and silence arising from the cultural construction of gender relations.

If it is on these issues that socialist feminism and socialism have historically diverged, it is on other but related issues that western feminism has been accused of cultural and racial imperialism by black women themselves. Some of these changes do not relate to the debates which I have outlined so far. African and black feminists and white feminists working in Africa have much common ground in the analysis of African women's oppression under imperialism and capitalism. The divisions lie in the direction of the feminist critique of culture and sexual identities and in the priorities of struggle.

This debate centres first around the fact that African women have had to struggle against both the oppressive sexual identities of their own cultures and the vicious imposition of western concepts of femininity in the course of imperial domination. Deprived of their cultural base, these latter appear conspicuously 'unnatural' and African women have a long history of resistance to their imposition through tax riots, for example, or through the desertion of development schemes which have offered women at best western 'domestic ideals' disguised as Home Economics and at worst (and often) have deprived them of the means to fulfil their own cultural identities as women (see, for example, Anna Conti's description in ROAPE 15/16).

Resistance to alien cultural values has not precluded struggles against those elements of indigenous culture and sexual identities which oppress. But, as in the west, these struggles have often historically been individual rather than collective, defensive rather than revolutionary, silent rather than public. They have concerned what Johnson and Bernstein called 'the cultural and ideological relations that inform marriage and the practices of family existence' and relate to that concept of struggle which feminists have described as 'the personal is the political'. Christine Obbo records many cases of the ambivalence and silence of women who have struggled against the oppressive practices of marriage and family life and gives some indication of the reasons why these struggles are silent. Women who struggle to maintain some economic independence from men may be accused of making their husbands impotent, or of prostitution or of neglecting their children and 'causing' juvenile crime. Similarly, women who vigorously dislike polygyny are confronted with claims that it is the natural birthright of the African (man). While there has been scope for individual acts of resistance, however, the exercise of individual strength often increases a woman's personal vulnerability. Those who are not deterred by male fantasies of female aggression encounter the moral crusades, the denigration and the violence against women who force their way out of male control.

The dilemma of the double struggle that African women have to engage against both western and indigenous cultural identities has been that acts of individual resistance are not only charged with being immoral rather than political but being in pursuit of western life styles and concepts of women's freedom rather
than African ones. These dilemmas have divided and silenced women. While it has been the object of feminism to raise 'morality' into its proper personal political context, it has been accused of dictating sexual standards and cultural aspirations, of policing the boundaries of acceptable feminism and imposing upon women of other cultures the aspirations which have emerged from the historical context of women's oppression in the west.

This charge has perhaps been most damaging to the solidarity between black and white women on the issue of cliterodectomy and its related practices. Feminists have understood the performance of cliterodectomy upon western women, last known to have occurred less than 40 years ago, as an obvious practice to mutilate women's bodies and destroy sexual pleasure in the interests of male sexuality. Its continued practice in Africa and elsewhere provokes horror. But the millions of women who continue to practice it perceive it as part of their cultural and religious concepts of female and male sexuality within which its abolition presents a threat and a void rather than an immediate solution to women's sexual oppression. Women who have individually found the strength to refute it or to campaign against it confront derision and are made deeply vulnerable. The collective struggles which are taking place now have to formulate an alternative concept of female sexuality which relates to African women's collective experience, history and aspirations. As Rowbotham says: 'There is much that is unclear and unknown in the making of a new culture . . .' Under these conditions, there are few grounds for an international feminist agenda dictating the outcome of women's personal/political struggles. There are, however, clear grounds for international solidarity in demand of political recognition of these personal/political struggles to enable women to organise collectively around these issues.

The second issue concerns the priority of these struggles in the process of national liberation and socialist transformation in Africa. To some extent, different priorities relate to circumstances — struggles against imperialism and racism demand the solidarity of women and men which African women have always provided and sometimes forced upon men. Then, too, imperialism has imposed laws, committed atrocities and destroyed lives to the extent that under nationalist reconstruction women's demands are for the basic means of existence and their very survival dependent upon the provision of basic amenities for themselves, their children and men to restore shattered economies and broken lives. In the process of reconstruction, socialist countries have got rid of discriminatory laws imposed by colonialism against women and struggled to provide those means of existence. They have also, in some places, succeeded in abolishing some of the forms of patriarchy embedded in pre-capitalist and peasant societies, such as bride-price. Women's organisations in Mozambique, Angola and other countries have been able to articulate demands for reproductive rights, for the social conditions for entering or re-entering productive labour and for a more equal division of domestic labour.

Yet in those countries, women's movements have not been the autonomous political organisations which feminists have demanded in the west. Moreover, their demands have not only been dictated by circumstances but by the socialist path to women's liberation which these states profess. These paths deny — like socialism has in the west — the historical contribution of feminism to socialist theory. In Mozambique, for example, the cause of women's oppression has been
attributed to 'decadent tradition' and capitalism (President Machel in his speech on Independence Day in Mozambique, published in ROAPE 4). Mozambique's socialist path disregards much socialist feminist tradition in favour of Engels. Women's liberation is to be achieved by the abolition of private property and women's entry into social production, both of which are inseparable from socialist strategy itself and therefore requiring no separate struggle. In his speech to the First Conference of Mozambican Women in 1973, Machel stated:

Let us be clear on this point: the antagonistic contradiction is not found between man and woman, but rather between women and the social order, between all exploited women and men, and the social order. It is her conditions of exploitation which explains her absence from all tasks of thought and decision in society ... This is the main aspect of the contradiction: her exclusion from the decision making sphere of society.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if women have been previously devoid of all tasks of thought and decision, they will need male guidance in formulating their struggles. And this seems to have been very much what Machel offered. First, he made it clear that women's oppression by men was a very secondary issue in the task of liberating women even though this experience of oppression included 'the marriage system, the frequent brutality of the husband (and) his systematic refusal to consider women his equal ...' These have been, amongst others, the very experiences of oppression against which western feminists have demanded a separate struggle. Secondly, Machel delegitimated struggles around these issues in the very terms which threaten international feminist solidarity — that feminism is a bourgeois deviation and an aspect of cultural imperialism:

We witness at present, mainly in the capitalist world, an ideological offensive which, under the aegis of women's liberation, pretends to transform into an antagonistic relationship the contradiction with man, thus dividing men and women ... In reality, beyond the demagogy which masks the real nature of this ideological offensive, it is an offensive by capitalist society in order to confuse women and to divert their attention from the real aim. In our ranks there occur small manifestations of this ideological offensive. We hear, here and there, women murmuring against men as if it were the sex difference that was the cause of their exploitation, as if men were sadistic monsters who take pleasure in women's oppression.

This statement defines the limits of permissible feminism in very clear ways. It is a secondary issue, it confuses women (not, apparently, men!) and it is not acceptable to suggest that men, rather than the social order, might be held in part responsible for the maintenance of gender divisions.

Of course, socialist feminism does not argue that women should not unite against men in common struggles against imperialism and class exploitation nor that men are sadistic monsters except that the cultural construction of male sexuality too often legitimates male violence. But it does argue that the reconstruction of the private domain of women's daily existence, which extends outwards into the experience of harassment and violence, is a pre-condition of freedom. What, then, of those women who had been heard 'murmuring against men', breaking the silence? In Ruth Neto's statement to the Angolan Women's Congress (published in this issue) she states that:

There are other problems women experience in their day-to-day lives which are a result not of external factors but of objective and subjective internal factors. It is up to us to give impetus to their solution because we experience and feel them more intensely.

It is because men do not feel them and because socialism does not recognise those
factors as political issues, that it is so easy to silence even the murmurings of women.

Pepe Roberts

Bibliographic Note

| What | has “development” done for women? |
| Why | do planners talk of “integrating” women into development? |
| What | role do women really play in multinational companies? in food production? in health? in communication and education? |
| How | are women organising themselves, and fighting to gain control over their own lives? |

Women in Development: a resource guide for organizing and action brings answers to all these questions. It makes a feminist analysis of the issues which are crucial to women in both developing and industrialised countries, and presents extensive literature audio-visual and group resources for action, study, and organizing. Publication 1983.

Price US$ 12 (includes surface postage, add $ 7 for airmail).
10 copies or more: $ 10 each (includes surface postage).

International money order or cheque payable to ISIS, P.O. Box 50, 1211 Geneva 2, SWITZERLAND. Currency equivalents acceptable.
Reviews


CAMS Internationale represents a new international grouping of women following the collapse of the ex-CAMS as a result of political divergences between some of its French women members and the Senegalese branch. The divergence lay in the definition and direction of women's struggles: the Senegalese branch demanded that they should be based in the political and cultural realities of each country in which women are actively fighting for liberation. The new international grouping includes the Senegalese section called Femmes et Sociétés and branches in Belgium, Germany, France and Britain* among others. The first number (No.0 for typically Senegalese reasons as the editors point out) of the quarterly journal has been produced by the Senegalese group but future issues are to address themselves to the forms of women's oppression internationally.

This issue reports on the first conference and resolutions of CAMS-Internationale held in Dakar in 1982 and on the establishment of an international resource centre to fight against female slavery and sexual abuse internationally. The centre part of the issue is taken up with interviews of Senegalese women of all classes and widely divergent views on the positions and problems of women in Senegal particularly since the succession of Abdou Diouf. Diouf authorised the sale of contraceptives, created a Secretariat d'Etat pour la Promotion Humaine, including women, and has supported the creation of a federation of women's groups. As one woman politician comments, however, most of the women's groups in Senegal have been created by men and do not challenge male privilege.

The issue reports news and views and a wide range of problems but at this stage the specific policies and practices of struggle have not yet been formulated.

Pepe Roberts

* The Women's Action Group: Female Excision and Infibulation; 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG.
THE WORLD BANK’S PRESCRIPTIONS FOR RURAL AFRICA


This Report is being offered as the new testament for agricultural development. We publish here three views that alert readers to different implications of this and other key recent documents by ‘aid’ agencies.


The apparent decline in agricultural production in Africa must have particularly profound implications for women because of the magnitude of their contributions to and dependence on the agricultural economy. Correspondingly, the policies advocated and the interventions implemented have implications for women, whether these are explicitly referred to or not. Deriving the implications of economic policy for women’s employment, incomes and general welfare is a difficult enterprise. What happens to women is necessarily related to what happens to men, and to the state of the economy in general; the nature of the relationship between these dimensions of social and economic life remains an issue of passionate polemics. How do different forms of accumulation affect women’s activities? How has the structure of domestic productive organisation affected African agricultural history? How are the effects of economic stagnation distributed? Does economic growth necessarily bring ‘progress’ for women? Many of these questions remain unresolved, research aimed at answering them is in its infancy and there is still an active concern with the conceptual and analytical problems involved in pursuing them in empirical work.

Since Ester Boserup re-opened the debate about women’s labour in African agriculture, the importance of women’s work in rural production has been confirmed, but little agreement has been reached on which it means for their own welfare and prospects, or for the course of agricultural change. In past policy recommendations one can find emphatically negative opinions about women’s involvement in farming, of which the following passage from a report on Cameroon is a particularly striking example.

Food cultivation is woman’s work. The free disposition she has of her own fields and the empiricism of her methods creates an agricultural problem throughout the country. In some places her usufruct rights create an agrarian problem. In others, her financial needs . . . forcing her to sell her product, create a commercialisation problem. The creation of new needs . . . makes her task heavier, which, when the possibility of evasion presents itself, leads to a rural exodus problem, and when there is no escape, it leads to a problem of subjection to too great a strain and a loss of status. (Barboteu et al. 1962:10).

Boserup, and others writing on women’s enterprise in processing and marketing, tended to redress the interpretative gloss in favour of the independence of African women by contrast with women in other societies (Boserup 1970). Since then, Huntington (1974) and Hart (1982), amongst others from a range of theoretical persuasions, have advocated a perspective on women in Africa which discards a romantic conception of that independence and proposes a more realistic concern with income, welfare and long-term prospects. They point out that women are occupied in low return stagnant sectors of the economy. The relationship between rural economic change and women’s occupations is a
subject of concern and controversy, with little clear agreement, but it is equally clearly a subject which cannot be ignored.

The two reports on the African economic crisis which are reviewed here (IBRD 1981; USDA 1981) manage to ignore women and these issues almost entirely. Women's occupations in the rural areas are mentioned obliquely under the rubric of 'family labour and living patterns' (USDA:111), and rhetorically with reference to the need for 'due attention to labour of both men and women' (IBRD:71). It is perhaps not surprising that the issues are glossed over since the policy implications certainly lack the seductive clarity and elegance of price manipulation. But what I want to explore here is the implicit bias against a serious estimation of women's agricultural activities which both reports, to different degrees and in different ways, also contain. This means taking an indirect approach and tracing the implications of their analyses and recommendations for women's occupations through the implications for agriculture in general.

The central substantive here is a striking neglect, particularly in the IBRD Report, of the importance of root crops in the African staple food economy. Even the USDA Report, which takes a far more imaginative approach to African agriculture, understates or fails to criticise the data on root crop production. Root crops, and particularly cassava, involve high female labour input. In most regions of West and Central Africa cassava is cultivated by women, and almost everywhere the essential processing to convert it into a storable and marketable form is women's work. Cassava is also a very important crop in the agricultural history of Africa. Imported from the New World, its cultivation has been greatly expanded in the past century or more by integration into indigenous intercropping and fallow cycles. Throughout its history, processing and marketing has been an artisanal occupation carried on within local economies, outside government market controls and the direct influence of an international price system. Several interpretive issues can therefore be related to one another through the reports' comments on root crop production: the advantages of current African farming patterns, the relative importance of cultivation and processing bottlenecks, the advisability of increasing integration into international input and commodity markets, and the productive potential of women's agricultural work. I will argue that by understating the importance of cassava production the reports understate an innovation which has taken place within African staple food economies, in favour of those sectors of the staple food economy which are more amenable to intervention and control.

The overall argument in the agricultural section of the IBRD Report is that the crisis in African agricultural production should be dealt with by increased integration into the world market. African agriculture is alleged to have a much stronger comparative advantage in the traditional export crops (cocoa, coffee, cotton, groundnuts, palm products, tea and tobacco) than in the food staples. At the same time, the available techniques for increasing production (fertiliser, chemical pest and weed control, mechanisation, improved crop varieties) apply with much greater ease to the export crops than they do to more complex cropping patterns characteristic of food cultivation. African production should be opened to market forces by a greater specialisation in export crops and by a greater use of purchased inputs. Measures to improve food output should emerge over the long run from improvements in export crop production; in the short run,
rapid expansion of food production will depend on the application of a technical package developed for irrigated agriculture (IBRD:50). The presently low level of input use is thought to indicate a 'massive potential' (IBRD:50). The hope for growth over the next decades, it is implied, rests on increasing the receptivity of African agriculture to external economic and technical measures.

But is the situation so uniformly bleak? The data in the reports and from other sources, suggest that it is overstated and under-differentiated. The poor comparative advantage of African food staples is judged entirely from figures on cereals (maize, millet, rice, sorghum) and one legume (groundnuts) (IBRD:65). Roots, tubers and plantain are not represented in this key table, possibly because they do not enter into international trade and therefore pose problems for the calculation of comparative advantage. Further data suggests that this is a vast oversight. Roots and tubers account for about 75 per cent as much total calorie production in Africa as all the cereals taken together (77,026 thousand metric tons p.a. 1977-79, compared with 41,669 thousand metric tons on cereals: IBRD:168). This would be less important if the production figures for roots reproduced the dismal performance of the cereals, but on the whole they do not, and where the reports can support their pessimism with numbers, it seems to be that the statistics are suspect. Before returning to the question of women's work, it is important to go over the data to demonstrate the problems with them in more detail.

According to the figures in the IBRD Report, amongst the food crops roots and tubers rank second to wheat and ahead of rice in the growth in yields between 1961-3 and 1977-9 (IRBD:169). It is the only crop, except tea, for which the productivity gap between Africa and the rest of the world has not widened over those 16 years (IBRD:64). The actual size of the productivity gap for root crops, again using the report's own figures, is second only to millet among the food crops. The rate of growth in total root and tuber production has been more stable than any other major food crop during the same period, keeping up with population growth at a fairly steady rate of 1.8 to 2.0 per cent per annum. And all this has been achieved with little research and investment by comparison with the resources devoted to wheat, rice, tea and sorghum. It hardly warrants either the neglect of the IBRD report nor the completely discrepant conclusion of the USDA:12). This is very low, particularly for cassava, but the reasons for such low roots and tubers' (USDA:105). If these figures are an accurate representation of the performance of root crop cultivation then it stands as one of the bright spots in recent agricultural history.

In my own view they still understate production by a large margin. Both reports indicate that root and tuber production is about 7 tons per hectare (IBRD:169; USDA:12). This is very low, particularly for cassava, by the reasons for such low figures are not examined. In the first place, neither report discusses the problem of comparing the production figures for mono- and multi-cropped farms. It makes no sense to compare production per crop per unit area when the crop densities and total production may be different due to patterns of inter-cropping.

Secondly, assuming the figures are correct, which is doubtful, account needs to be taken of the almost universal practice of planting cassava at the end of the rotation cycle in Africa. Before returning a field to fallow it is often completely planted in cassava because it yields fairly well even on depleted soil. Jones points out that yields vary according to the soil quality, up to 25-50 per cent higher when
planted on good soil, early in the rotation (Jones 1959:256). The comparative figures fail to illuminate what may be critical variables in the techniques of production.

Finally, the yield figures themselves are discrepant with classic studies done in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the baseline dates for the IBRD trends. Belgian research in Zaire in the 1950s suggested that a typical farmer might produce 15-20 tons of cassava per hectare, in contrast to the six tons of tubers quoted in the reports. On good soil cassava can be expected to produce as much as 25 tons per hectare (Jones 1959:256). According to Phillips, writing on Nigeria, ‘up to 12 tons of tubers per acre is obtained but anything from five to ten tons is a reasonable crop dependent on soil’, i.e. about 30 tons, or 12½ to 25 tons per hectare depending on the conditions (Phillips 1964:14). These figures are twice to three times as high as the figures in the reports. In the face of some of these classic statements it is hard to justify a total lack of discussion of the difficulties of measuring productivity, and the wide variation in measures and estimates. Even a fairly minor revision of the stated productivity figures would put root and tuber production in Africa in line with the rest of the world, instead of its present position as quite definitely inferior.

The cursory treatment given to the root crop sector in the discussion of production is repeated in the discussion of marketing. The IBRD report notes that, almost alone amongst agricultural products, roots and vegetables are sold through private intermediaries. ‘Price and marketing controls are conspicuously absent for roots and vegetables’ (IBRD:59). But, in spite of the great stress laid on the advantages of ‘private enterprise’, this characteristic of the root crop market is not highlighted. It is an irony of the report that the data contains so much evidence about the relative success and vitality of root crop production and marketing, while the text says so little.

The USDA report has the converse problem; the picture it paints of root crop production is even more gloomy, but its prospects are considered in a more positive light. Contrary to reports by the FAO (1978) and IFPRI (1977), it maintains that roots and tubers are not necessarily considered an inferior food by consumers and will continue to be important for both urban and rural diets in West and Central Africa (USDA:249-250). These conclusions reflect a generally positive view of current African practice; for example, it is claimed that ‘mixed cropping takes a more highly skilled farmer than sole-crop farming’ (USDA:87), that it is more suited to the African ecology than any feasible alternative, and that the problem lies less in cultivation practices per se than in the situation under which they ‘are beginning to reach their limits’ (USDA:14).

The question is: which factors account for the limits? In terms of labour bottlenecks, it seems clear from local studies that the scarce labour resource in cassava production is not in cultivation but in processing for storage and sale. Cassava is quickly perishable without conversion, but processing is considerably more time-consuming than the farming itself. Miracle’s data, quoted from studies in Zaire, suggest that cultivation accounts for only one quarter of the labour required to produce the local cassava flour (1966:214) and Adam’s figures from the Congo suggest that the proportion is one third (1980:6). A significant part of the cassava crop is never harvested in many systems, for lack of time to process it or lack of price incentives. In fact, any major increase in total production will require innovations in processing to cope with it. Richards (forthcoming) has
emphasised that agricultural growth in the 20th century has entailed enormously increased labour input into processing and off-farm tasks, much of it female labour, which he contends should be considered as one of the key factors in analysing the transformation of the sexual division of labour in household-based production. But there is very little in either report about the strategic importance of improving the productivity of processing labour as distinct from the labour spent on cultivation. Attention to female labour, to cassava production, and to regional staple food markets, rather than a focus upon undifferentiated family labour, cereals, and national marketing policy, would lead to a greater concern with the conditions under which local crops are processed for distribution.

The two reports approach the crisis in African agriculture from quite different premises; the IBRD would apply measures which derive from established economic and technical systems, while the USDA advocates research on the development of new bodies of knowledge about African agricultural systems. Both, however, tend to understate the importance and relative success of the sectors in which women work. It has been my main goal here to demonstrate this point, using the reports' own data or questioning their accuracy by comparison with other sources. But going beyond a critique requires examination of the kinds of conditions under which women work and identification of the labour bottlenecks they have to cope with or circumvent. These conditions have a great deal to do with the potential for expanding cassava production and sales for the domestic market.

Thumbnail sketches of complex farming systems run the risk of stereotyping. But, with that proviso, I would suggest that the bottlenecks in the two systems with which I am familiar, the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria and the Beti of southern Cameroon, reflect the different division of agricultural and processing tasks by sex. Both rural populations produce cassava to feed major urban markets as well as for home consumption.

It is primarily Yoruba men who do the food crop farming. The processing of cassava is done by the farmers themselves with their wives, or by self-employed women specialists. Relative pricing and monetary incentives are critical to the allocation of labour to cassava processing. Women specialists purchase the cassava in the fields, by the row, and are responsible for the harvest and transport as well as the processing. The farmers can soak and dry their own cassava, employing a process which required no cooking, or sell to independent women producers. Many do both. But farmers in one food producing region suggested that the amount they harvested or sold at any one time depended on the price and/or their particular incomes needs. When prices rose, rural women expanded their processing activities and more cassava was harvested. The alternative possibilities for women to earn a living in the rural areas, and the rates of return to different activities, constitute an important determinant of the amount of cassava grown which is converted into a marketable product.

Amongst the Beti, like many Central African populations, food cultivation is primarily women's work. The expansion of cassava processing for the market therefore runs up against the absolute shortage of processing labour. At present, all rural women farm the food crops which provide the family diet, and have intensified this pattern of farming to produce a surplus for the market. Cassava is one of the staples of the diet, and in villages with good access to the market it can be sold fresh, without processing into flour. But any bulk supply to the
market would require an expansion of processing labour. This is difficult to achieve under present conditions because of the workload involved in combining both activities. There are barriers to the development of specialist occupations among rural women, since they have always been expected to provide most of the basic foodstuffs for domestic consumption. As farmers they face the constraint of the absolute level of work and the space/time management problems of cultivating and supervising the drying of cassava, at the same time, in a tropical climate. Women already work long hours in farming, small-scale marketing and domestic duties. The additional work of transporting large amounts of cassava from the fields, drawing water for soaking, fetching wood for cooking, and organising someone to watch over the drying process to protect it from rain or the depredations of livestock, is very demanding. The women who do this on a regular basis, as well as farming, are working very hard, as Adam describes for the rural women who supply the urban market of Brazzaville (1980). In this situation, the lack of incentive in low market prices is compounded by the difficulty of response when prices rise. This is not a function of low productivity in a general sense, or lack of market responsiveness by women farmers, but of the processing bottleneck.

Innovations in the techniques and organisation of cassava processing offer one possibility for some of the potential of an already fairly successful sector of the African food economy to be realised more fully. Taking this position avoids the stark alternatives, either about farming or about women’s position in it, which tend to dominate the literature. The ‘crisis’ approach to African agriculture conveys a uniformly bleak picture. As I have attempted to show here, this interpretation is not altogether supported by the facts quoted, and the facts themselves are open to rather large margins of error. Constructing such a picture appears to clarify the policy choices, but it clarifies them at the expense of misrepresenting differential levels of functioning, and deriving from this start view an equally stark set of alternative courses of action. The simple view is achieved by omitting both direct and indirect recognition of the importance and the relative success of women’s activities in the African rural sector.

Jane I. Guyer

Bibliographic Notes

The two reports on the African agricultural crisis reviewed here are:

Other references are to:
The World Bank and Nigeria’s ‘Green Revolution’

The Berg Report cannot be blamed on Professor Berg in particular. It shows all the signs of institutional drafting and compilation. Its arguments are unoriginal. They reproduce the thinking and recommendations which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have advanced consistently since they were founded. Their case is strengthened by the implicit ‘I told you so’, with which the Bank can point to the unhappy results of protectionist trade policies, exchange controls, state marketing and expanded government expenditure.

The Report’s arguments are also contradictory. They combine a *laissez-faire* ideology of economic management with a commitment to funding government intervention in the form of development projects. These contradictions arise from the basic contradiction in the Bank’s constitution and in its institutional development. On the one hand the Bank is committed to promoting free trade, free currency exchange and thus freedom to invest and to repatriate profits. Indeed, its first article of agreement requires it to ‘promote private foreign investment’. On the other hand, it is a public institution which lends money to governments to pay for public investments. Generally, these investments, in railways, roads, power stations, telecommunications, irrigation systems, agricultural extension projects, do not or cannot repay their loans from their revenues. Governments repay their loans from their overall revenue and foreign exchange resources. Their agricultural projects increase government expenditure and government intervention in production and marketing.

The Report effectively criticises protectionist policies for raising costs to consumers and exporters, encouraging import-intensive industries and for making ‘lavish use of (scarce) administrative capacity’ (p.28) and encouraging bribery to get around bureaucratic delays.

Following Lele’s 1975 report for the Bank, they ignore the last 100 and more years of African history, telling us that ‘as the post-colonial period began, most Africans were outside the modern economy’. Because of the ‘dominance of subsistence production’, farmers ‘had to be induced to produce for the market, adopt new crops and undertake new risks, (p.12). Hence the need for government intervention. Later on they discover that smallholders not only ‘are outstanding managers of their own resources’ but ‘can be counted on to respond to changes in the profitability of their crops . . . ’ (p.35). This leads to a cogent argument for encouraging private trading.

The Report points out that exploitation of farmers through the market is better solved by increasing competitiveness than by imposing public monopolies. State monopolies in food crops tend to create private (black-market) monopolies. Government marketing imposes high costs on producers, on government budgets and on consumers. Inter-district, and particularly rural-rural marketing channels are disrupted. In the absence of an unlimited supply of imports, ‘cheap’ food
policies make food more expensive. Marketing boards have taxed export crops, and thus reduced exports and export revenues. The point has been made often enough, but still has not been taken. The abolition of state marketing boards and monopolies is the best way of increasing agricultural production and rural incomes. Similarly, the Report (pp.60-61) criticises monopolist distribution of fertiliser and other inputs for restricting their timely availability to farmers and creating black markets.

The Report's commitment to free markets is not unqualified. It argues for a 'gradual freeing of domestic food markets'; however, anything less than complete withdrawal allows the selective allocation of trading opportunities. Governments, it argues, can provide 'better information on crop sizes and prices' (p.65) as if traders do not have better sources of market intelligence than officials. They should 'introduce uniform weights and measures' (p.65), showing an odd faith on the author's part in administrative probity. They might also manage grain imports, operate buffer stocks to stabilise prices, expand grain storage and purchase grain for the army and other public institutions (p.65-6). These activities are likely to produce managed scarcity, irregular supplies and fluctuating prices. They leave considerable scope for the profitable collusion of officials and businessmen. These suggestions were probably intended to accommodate bureaucratic interests and political protests against the report.

Monopolist input distribution and marketing is essential to the 'outgrower' schemes attached to 'nuclear estates' and processing facilities currently attached to 'nucleus estates' and processing facilities currently favoured by agro-industrial firms, aid agencies and the Berg Report itself (p.52). The Report suggests (p.75) that 'rural development projects ... be built around a commercial lead crop (cotton, for example) which offers a confirmed technical package, an assured outlet (and) a means of cost and credit recovery ...' 'Commercial' here appears to exclude staple food crops grown for sale. It refers rather to crops which cannot be sold on domestic markets, but must be sold to the firm managing the project and, possibly, the cotton gins or sugar mills, or for export to a government agency. Input and marketing monopolies, often backed up by government legislation, allow a firm to provide inputs on credit, require them to be used as specified, and recover the cost when the crop is sold.

The Report criticises irrigation projects for their high costs, and thus the high prices or subsidies required to cover the cost of irrigated wheat or rice production. They point out that expensively developed areas remain unfarmed, because of poor water management, supply of inputs and the slow 'speed with which farmers not accustomed to irrigation can absorb new techniques and the required cultivation discipline (p.77). The authors' managerial approach blinds them to the obvious point that farmers have different priorities to the scheme management. For example, on the Kano River scheme in Nigeria, farmers are growing sorghum for food thus delaying the early planting of the scheme's crop, wheat, and conflicting with project management objectives. The Report does point out that irrigated farming 'is often carried out without enthusiasm' since farmers 'cannot avoid the official marketing channel' (p.77) which earlier (p.75) was to provide a 'means of cost and credit recovery'. In Nigeria and elsewhere 'there has been vigorous growth of informal small-scale irrigation in flood plain and swamps' (p.80). In Nigeria, massive investment in irrigation dams has possibly reduced the area under irrigation by preventing flooding of land
downstream. Not content to leave well alone, the Berg Report suggests that this area be expanded by projects, which will apparently regulate land tenure and possibly the choice of crops (p.80).

Coyly, the Berg Report does not mention the World Bank’s widely publicised 1975 ‘Rural Sector’ policy paper, published in its The Assault on World Poverty. Implicitly, the Berg Report criticises the concern of the 1975 paper with redistribution and helping the poorest 40 per cent. This does not reflect a change in the actual practice of the Bank. There is no evidence that any of its rural development projects were designed to help the poorest, let alone that they ever did so. Bank projects lacked the institutional capacity to assist the poorest, even if they had wanted to do so. Both reports recommend assistance to large-scale private farmers as well as to smallholders (1975: pp.12, 40; Berg, p.52). Berg recommends that projects should concentrate on regions of high commercial potential and that in ‘a smallholder-based strategy . . . larger farmers can be used to spearhead the introduction of new methods’. Berg exemplifies these strategies with a full-page summary of the Northern Nigerian Agricultural Development Projects.

These projects supplied ‘large-scale farmers’ with management services and reserved them supplies of highly-subsidised fertiliser. The projects recommended these farmers to commercial banks for subsidised loans to buy tractors. As Berg puts it such farmers have ‘political clout and provide an informal channel to the government’ including, as they do, the official who negotiated the project, army officers and businessmen. However, large scale farmers do not lean ‘over the fence’ to provide ‘a demonstration to smaller farmers’ (p.64). They do not live in villages and do not adopt production strategies which conform to the resources and preferences of most farmers. They were ‘more innovative’ — that is, willing to follow the project’s recommendations as to what to grow (especially ‘yellow’ maize) but were not ‘the greater risk-takers’ (p.64). Their venture into farming depended on the project and the government paying most of the costs.

The World Bank’s support for large-scale farmers was a political pay-off. More important to the projects themselves were their ‘progressive’ farmers, from whom the benefits would ‘trickle down’. These are typically rural residents who combine farming with trading. They rely on their own labour and that of their families which they combine with employment of wage workers on a day-to-day basis. It is easier for the project administration to provide inputs and advice to selected ‘progressive’ farmers than to try and reach all farmers directly. By allocating limited, and subsidised, resources to the few, the project denies them to the majority. In this particular case, ‘progressive’ farmers found that ‘large scale farmers’ and traders pre-empted much of the available fertiliser. Their protests led to a change in the administration of supplies of fertiliser, which did ‘trickle down’ to themselves and beyond to the majority of smallholders!

The original objective of the projects was to improve the productivity of ‘commercial’ crops, cotton, ‘yellow’ maize, which is used primarily as poultry feed and groundnuts by the use of high-yielding varieties, insecticides and fertiliser. ‘Yellow’ maize production did increase rapidly, and glutted the market in 1980. Cotton production, however, fell as farmers switched production to guinea-corn (sorghum) in response to rising demand, particularly in rural markets further north. Thus, grain production did increase, though in a way other than the project had intended. It was ‘successful’ in organising an
expensive way of distributing very cheap fertiliser to favoured areas of the country and, within them, to favoured beneficiaries.

The Berg Report suggests that the high fertiliser prices were unnecessary, given the high price of the crops. This is probably true, especially as the main beneficiaries were those able to pay higher prices. However, if the extensive use of cheap fertiliser is set aside, it is not clear what the projects contributed to increased agricultural production. As the Berg Report itself recognises, they certainly cannot justify their costs.

The Berg Report does not criticise the World Bank's own failures directly, perhaps because the bank never publicly admits to failures and does not depend on the success of its projects for the repayment of its loans. They do point out that food imports into Africa increased dramatically 'over a period when the various governments and external sources of finance focused more strongly on food production than ever before' (p.47).

A confidential report on five World Bank-financed projects in Tanzania in the 1970s identified three reasons for their failure, all predictable from previous Tanzanian and other experience. Prices were too low; administrative capacity was inadequate; technical recommendations were inappropriate. Berg's critique of current policies makes all of these points.

However, Berg presumes that agricultural development requires aid-financed projects, together with policy reforms, which donors can help governments to identify (pp.121, 124) — despite the poor record of both governments and donors hitherto (p.121). Aid will presumably induce government to reform their policies, though the Report never mentions 'conditionality'. The World Bank has been geared since its inception to lending money for projects. These have operated with high budgets on a large scale, using expensive and usually foreign technicians and administrators. They have sought to introduce new technologies, untried in the local environment, without regard for local variations in soil, climate or social structure, or for local farming systems or market demand. Project appraisals have quantified imaginary 'data' and been programmed to predict appropriate discounted internal rates of return. These features of World Bank projects, replicated across the world, arise from the institutional structure of the Bank itself, its relations to debtor governments, and the form and scale of Bank projects.

What we need to ask is whether agricultural production and incomes can be prompted by more 'aid' funded loans to pay for 'rural development' projects or whether it is not time to call a halt to the whole wasteful and harmful business.

Gavin Williams

Bibliographic Note
This review is taken from a longer paper, 'Decoding Berg: the World Bank in Northern Nigeria' by Paul Clough and Gavin Williams, to be published in a volume of essays on Nigerian agriculture edited by Michael Watts. In that paper Clough examines the way the Funtua ADP affected a specific hamlet. There are several more general accounts of the Northern Nigerian ADPs, notably Wallace in ROAPE No.17 and Beckman forthcoming. Wallace has discussed Nigerian irrigation projects in her contribution to this Review and in J. Heyer, P. Roberts and G. Williams eds., Rural Development in Tropical Africa, (Macmillan, London, 1981). On inter-rural grain marketing, see Clough's case studies in P.

REVIEWS 197

THE BERG REPORT AND THE MODEL OF ACCUMULATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA*

Crisis in Africa — Berg's Diagnosis and Prescription

In 1981 the World Bank published Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa — An Agenda for Action which sought to analyse the reasons for the widespread economic crisis being experienced by the region in the late 1970s and to prescribe a future course of action to 'accelerate' development there. This document, prepared under the supervision of Elliot Berg, one of the Bank's principal ideologues, can be taken to represent the view of the Bank on these issues and, accordingly, one can expect that Bank policies and programme in this region will be guided by it in the near future. Also, the report is likely to have a considerable influence on the thinking and actions of bilateral donors, many of whom look to the IBRD for guidance on economic analysis and policy direction. Given the acute dependence of Sub-Saharan Africa on economic aid and on foreign advisers, there is a strong possibility that the Berg report will be influential in shaping views in Africa about the causes of economic crisis and, more importantly, in moulding future economic policy. Certainly, it has not been taken lightly in the 45 states that it covers. In Tanzania, for instance, President Nyerere is reported to have insisted that all his cabinet ministers read it even though (perhaps because?) it is highly critical of that country's policies and performance. It is also the subject of discussions at the international level between African states. For all these reasons the report is an important one that merits careful consideration. The purpose of this paper is to review its contents and to assess the nature, appropriateness and desirability of its recommendations.

It is no easy matter to summarise the report given the wealth of material it covers but, at the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that its central theme is that 'domestic policy issues are at the heart of the crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa' (p.121). In support of this position it argues that 'past trends in the terms of trade cannot explain the slow economic growth of Africa in the 1970s because for most countries . . . the terms of trade were favourable or neutral' (p.19). The principal reason for widespread crises in the current account of the balance of payments experienced by many African countries in the 1970s was the slow growth in export volume. This slow growth reflected domestic policy biases against agriculture and against exports in favour of industrialisation based on import substitution which was misguided, high cost and inefficient. These biases were propagated and reinforced by inappropriate policies in the areas of exchange rates, taxation, urban wages and prices and other direct controls. Growth was also retarded by the replacement or restriction of the private sector by the state in all major sectors of the economy to the point where the state sector, in either its government or parastatal form, has overreached its administrative and management capabilities. The acute fiscal crises being experienced by many African states are symptoms of this over-expansion which takes the form of the provision, without user charges, of extensive education, health and water supply facilities, the growth of expenditures on administration and defence, and the emergence of parastatal deficits which must be met from the budget. Finally, poor export growth and per capita income growth were partly caused by excessive population growth.

*This review will appear in Politics and Agriculture in Africa, edited by Jonathan Barker and published by Sage in 1984. It is reproduced here by kind permission of the Editor.
From this diagnosis of the problems follow the policy prescriptions of the report which focus on stimulating agricultural exports, encouraging private sector activities and allowing market forces to operate more pervasively as state controls over economic activity are dismantled. The key to accelerated development in future would be the expansion of agricultural exports produced largely by peasant farmers, whose activities would be encouraged by a significant increase in their real net returns, achieved by reducing state controls over the prices and distribution of farm inputs and farm outputs, and by the depreciation of the exchange rate. Investment strategies in this sector would be 'production-focused', concentrating on 'regions with relatively high potential' and using larger farmers 'to spearhead the introduction of new methods' (p.52). Private enterprise would be encouraged to replace the state in most sectors and the relief that this would provide to the budget would be heightened by the imposition of user charges on public services currently being provided free of charge. Industrial development would be clearly subordinate to agricultural growth and would again be oriented towards export expansion on the grounds that the next logical phase of import substitution in Africa, into intermediate goods production, is not feasible due to the small size of the domestic market. To enable countries to export manufactured goods successfully exchange rate devaluation would again be needed as would be other measures designed to reduce the real wages of urban workers. Parastatal industrial enterprises would operate on commercial lines and the state would encourage the activities of indigenous entrepreneurs.

The report concludes that foreign aid flows to the region should be doubled in real terms by the end of the 1980s. Aid should be more flexible than in the past, and should be co-ordinated more closely by donors themselves. The report emphasises that aid flows of the size and quality recommended are not likely to materialise unless recipient countries adopt structural adjustment programmes along the lines proposed, including more aggressive family planning programmes. If they do, and if aid targets are realised, then GDP growth per capita can be expected to reach 1 per cent per annum maximum in the 1980s.

Assessment of the Report
At the level of detailed specifics there is much that one can agree with in the Berg Report, but it is not the purpose of this discussion to draw up a scoreboard of individual points of agreement or disagreement. Instead, the intention is to focus on the validity of the Report's view of the historical origins of the crisis in Africa and on the nature and viability of the alternative model of accumulation it is seeking to promote in this part of the world. It will be argued that Berg seriously underestimates the importance of 'external' factors in shaping policy and performance in Sub-Saharan Africa over the last decade and, equally, overestimates what is likely to be achieved by integrating African economies even more firmly into the world system as it currently operates. Successful implementation of the 'Agenda for Action' would entail abrupt and far-reaching re-alignments of class interests and require a degree of state coercion unprecedented in much of Africa.

There is a certain irony in the fact that the release of the Berg Report coincided with the worst crisis in the global economy since the Great Depression. The collapse in the terms of trade for African countries since 1978 has been dramatic and is not captured in data available to Berg. For low income countries south of the Sahara, the average deterioration between 1978 and 1981 was 19 per cent (27
per cent for Ethiopia, 26 per cent for Madagascar); for middle income countries it was 13 per cent (36 per cent for Ghana, 30 per cent for Ivory Coast). (World Bank, 1982a:30). The terms of trade have continued to decline since then so that any gains made in the 1970-78 period have been more than offset. In this situation African governments are likely to receive with justified scepticism the argument that their balance of payments problems are the result of domestic policy shortcomings or that the way forward is to produce more for the world market.

While members of the World Bank team can hardly be faulted for not being clairvoyant they can be for inadequately treating the impact of instability of the global economy on domestic policy and performance over the time period they reviewed. Fluctuations in terms of trade can be as, if not more, important to producers than trend movements and for many African exports it is much easier to restrict output in response to falls in net returns than it is to reverse the process when net returns rise. Thus in the early 1970s deliberate steps were taken to reduce the production of such crops as coffee and sisal in the face of deteriorating market prospects. Reversing that process involved production lags of three to five years not counting the lead time needed to convince producers of the stability of medium/long-term prospects. Likewise the impact of the 1973-74 oil and food price increases is totally down-played in the Berg Report which assesses terms of trade movements by reference to the years of 1970, 1975 and 1979 only. The implicit assumption that African economies can adjust smoothly and quickly to such profound external shocks is a highly questionable one. For many African countries the increased fuel bill, even after significant reduction in fuel usage, has seriously eroded their ability to purchase essential imports for the agricultural and industrial sectors, thus creating production bottlenecks that are difficult to break without a significant increment in available foreign exchange.

The Report also greatly understates the importance of external advice and of external aid generally in the formulation of domestic policy in Africa. It is as if the IBRD, in particular, has no collective memory of its own advice and certainly no interest in introspection or self-criticism. Yet the Bank and other aid donors have themselves been responsible for promoting many of the structural characteristics that they find so objectionable. Thus the Bank has actively participated in creating an industrial structure which is highly dependent on imported inputs and on scarce skilled technical and managerial personnel. The Bank also participated actively in various aspects of agricultural planning including, in many countries, advising on crop price formulation — yet nowhere in the Report is there any evaluation of its record in these areas.

In the past, the IBRD has been guilty of the fallacy of composition in advising countries to diversify agricultural production, by not adequately forecasting the decline in prices that would inevitably follow widespread acceptance of that advice. Thus, as the output of tea and tobacco has increased significantly over the past 10 years stimulated by IBRD/IDA programmes, world prices have in consequence fallen. It appears from the Berg Report that the Bank is in danger of committing the same error again but this time on a much grander scale. It projects that world prices of five out of nine of Africa’s major food exports are likely to decline in the 1980s even before implementation of its proposals for promoting agricultural exports, and while it admits that Africa’s ‘dependence on exports of slowly growing primary products is a disadvantage’ it then glibly asserts that
'exports can be diversified' and that 'Africa's share of world trade in most commodities could be increased with relatively small effects on prices' (p.23). Yet Africa is important in the world production of cocoa, coffee, tea, sisal, groundnuts, groundnut oil, palm products and cotton, and a doubling of their export growth rates (as Berg assumes, from the worst aid case with no policy changes at one extreme, to the best aid case with complete acceptance of the Action package at the other) would undoubtedly have a negative impact on world prices. More to the point, African countries would do well to check out the kind of advice the Bank is giving to primary producers elsewhere in the world before blithely accepting its price projections or its exhortations to diversify production.

Similar objections could be raised about the possibility of the export of manufactured goods becoming an important part of an African development strategy in the current decade. The economic crisis in industrialised capitalist countries has thrown the dozen or so newly industrialised countries (NICs) into economic disarray. In 1981, their growth rates were negative and the stagnation of their export markets made it impossible for most of them to service the massive international debts that had been so central in financing the development of their export capacity. The resulting financial crisis, which threatens the whole international banking system, is being met by the adoption of harsh austerity programmes in these countries designed to reduce drastically demand for local and imported goods. The resort to large and frequent devaluations is an attempt to reinforce domestic austerity and to make exports more attractive by reducing the real wages of workers relative to those of competitors. Each NIC is desperately trying to retain or increase its share of a market that is no longer growing.

Even when their market was growing steadily, as it was in earlier years, serious reservations were expressed about the possibility of this type of industrialisation being generalisable among underdeveloped countries without provoking a strong protectionist reaction from Europe and North America. How much less generalisable is the model when the industrialised capitalist countries themselves are in crisis!

The current global crisis, therefore, highlights very vividly the shortcomings of the export-oriented model of accumulation that is being peddled by the World Bank; but even if world markets were more buoyant, there would be other serious objections to this model. Principal among these is the overtly regressive distribution of income and wealth that it implies. In this respect, the Berg Report drops any pretence at addressing ‘basic needs’ which has featured prominently in World Bank rhetoric in recent years. Instead, it proposes to cut urban wages and to levy user fees for government services such as health, education and water supply. Rural investment is to be concentrated on the most productive areas and on larger, ‘progressive’ farmers; whole areas of the economy are to be thrown open to the private sector, both domestic and foreign, under the stimulus of government incentives. There is nothing nuanced about this; the unbridled forces of the market are to be allowed to operate and narrowly defined ‘efficiency’ and ‘growth’ are to become the central objectives of economic policy.

It could be said that the Berg Report is, in this area, a more honest document than many to emanate from the Bank, for there can be no denying that while the IBRD has talked piously of the importance of meeting basic needs, the weight of its advice and of its programming has always tended to favour promotion of
private enterprise and of 'progressive' farmers and to encourage free markets and production for the market as opposed to self-consumption. In a report published shortly after the Berg Report, the Bank admitted that its rural development programmes have provided few direct benefits for the landless, for tenants unable to offer collateral for loans, and for the 'near-landless' farmer who finds it hard to borrow, acquire inputs, and take risks (World Bank, 1982b) yet these are the very sections of rural society least able to meet their basic needs. This particular report then goes on to recommend that in future bank activities should have a more explicitly poverty-focused orientation. But the recommendations of the Berg Report swing in an entirely opposite direction.

The Bank's concern with 'basic needs' has been largely rhetorical because of its failure to address the problem of the necessity to transform the social relations of production that create and perpetuate poverty. The model of accumulation proposed by the Berg Report would also require a radical restructuring of the balance of class forces in African societies, albeit in a different direction, yet the report does not address the political ramifications of this. While existing models of accumulation may be losing their legitimacy in the face of sustained crisis, the alternative model proposed by Berg is likely to prove even more difficult to legitimate as it undermines the position of workers relative to that of capital, as it seeks to weaken the position of the bureaucratic and managerial elite (in many countries now unambiguously a class) in the state sector relative to that of domestic and foreign capitalists, and as it strengthens inequalities in the rural areas. Its implementation would probably generate such widespread political tensions that it would require significant state repression of one sort or another to see it through. This has certainly been the pattern elsewhere where states have moved rapidly towards export and market-oriented models of accumulation.

The success of the NICs, especially, owes a great deal to political repression often involving direct military intervention. Military dictatorships are particularly suited to the task of restructuring the economy along these lines because, on seizing power, the military usually has no clearly defined class interest in one model of accumulation or another. At the same time it has the ability to impose its will on those sections of society resisting abandonment of the old model of accumulation thereby ending, at least temporarily, the political crisis emanating from the contradictions inherent in that model. The new model cannot, however, be sustained indefinitely by political repression; sooner or later it must be legitimised by generating a degree of social harmony. This will not happen if its very essence is dependent, for instance, upon a level of workers' real wages that can be maintained only by political repression. Neither can it achieve legitimacy if it is wracked by crisis. The current political crises in such countries as Chile, Argentina, Brazil and the Philippines are as much the product of a failure to legitimise their export/market oriented models of development internally, as they are of the global economic crisis and market collapse, though the latter have served to sharpen domestic tensions that have hitherto been tightly controlled. It remains to be seen whether this model will still be a viable one once military juntas are replaced by more liberal regimes.

One does not, however, need to leave the continent of Africa for confirmation of the political dimensions of the export oriented model of accumulation. The Republic of South Africa has been pursuing a Berg-like strategy for some years and its emergence as an NIC can be traced directly to the institutionalised
repression of its Black population under the system of apartheid. It is upon this foundation, of the super-exploitation of labour, that South Africa has attracted western direct investment and huge bank loans. Well before the onset of the global crisis the fascist state was finding it increasingly difficult to contain the liberation struggle and internal pressures can be expected to mount as the economic crisis deepens.

The struggle against apartheid and minority white rule has had far-reaching implications for all the front line states in southern Africa. Liberation struggles in Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa, have placed an enormous burden on neighbouring independent African states, and significantly influenced their economic performance. At the present time there is a state of war between South Africa and Angola and Mozambique which dominates the political economy of the whole region of southern Africa. Yet the Berg Report pays no attention to this whatsoever, cursorily dismissing the struggles for independence as being 'in general . . . remarkably peaceful' and concentrating instead of post-independence political and social turmoils without, of course, searching for the contribution that 'external' or historical factors might have made to these unfortunate upheavals.

The Berg Report had little option but to ignore South Africa and Namibia entirely for introducing them would not only have raised awkward questions about the nature of the model of accumulation it is advocating; it would also have made it difficult to sustain the argument that economic crisis, in this part of Africa, at least is the result of purely domestic mismanagement. Further, acknowledging the economic stranglehold that South Africa has over this region would have required the Report to qualify its bland exhortations in favour of regional co-operation, and to recognise both the urgency for such co-operation and the enormous structural and political difficulties that SADCC faces in making it a reality. For, paralleling its military offensive, South Africa has launched an equally determined economic offensive to strengthen its economic ties with neighbouring African countries in a bid to forestall the development of alternative economic unions.

African governments seem to be well aware of the political implications of rushing headlong into the export oriented model of accumulation and, so far, the Berg Report has received a cool reception in Africa. Yet Africa is in the midst of crisis and the import substitution/primary export model has more or less run its course, raising the question of what happens next. Increasingly, African governments are being left with no choice but to seek emergency financial support from the International Monetary Fund and, to a lesser extent, from the IBRD in the form of structural adjustment loans. It is at this point that pressure is being applied on governments to move in the direction of implementing the recommendations of the Berg Report. The report itself blatantly exhorts aid donors to make their assistance conditional upon economic reforms along the lines it suggests, and these reforms are entirely consistent with the 'conditionality' attached to IMF and IBRD balance of payments loans. Thus, what can be expected in future is that more and more African countries will be pressured by external agencies to adapt Berg-type proposals in piece-meal fashion. The gradual adoption of the model in this way would still be no easy task as the failure rate of African governments to meet IMF and IBRD performance criteria is very high indeed; an indication of the political difficulties involved in
managing the ‘shock treatment’ by which the IMF in particular, prefers to introduce this model, and of the inherent contradictions within the model itself. Indeed, a reasonable case could be made that IMF ‘assistance’ is as likely to generate political crisis as it is to forestall it. From this perspective the future of Sub-Saharan Africa looks to be a very bleak one indeed.

There are, however, alternative models to which Africa might turn, which are more auto-centred in character. Of these, C.Y. Thomas’s convergence model is by far the most promising. In this model production is geared first and foremost to utilising local resources to meet democratically defined needs and foreign trade is simply an extension of domestic production, not its determinant. The emphasis is on centring production around a range of basic goods or goods which figure prominently in the production of other goods and which, therefore, have extensive forward and backward linkages and which have a high income elasticity of value added. Thomas argues that cost efficient scales of production can be much smaller than the optimal scale and this also facilitates democratic control and greater regional balance. Where local needs are still much smaller than the cost efficient scale of production the excess can be exported, so the model is not autarkic. The need for foreign aid is acknowledged provided it is consistent with the convergence strategy.

This model presupposes the collective ownership of the means of production, economic planning in physical terms, and the desire to build a socialst society. Unlike the World Bank approach, it addresses directly the class impediments to the eradication of poverty and the interrelationship between class structure, income and wealth distribution and the structure of production.

The political prerequisites for implementing this model are obviously very demanding but to a degree could be met by countries such as Angola and Mozambique were it not for the state of siege in which they find themselves at the present time. The rate at which the strategy could be implemented would still be conditioned by the global crisis as the surplus would need to come, for many years into the future, from the very sectors one is attempting to transform. Thus phasing in convergent production would still be constrained by the world demand for traditional exports, by the price of imports and by the quantity and quality of available aid, but these constraints would ease as the convergent structure began to dominate. Countries would still have an interest in improving the efficiency of traditional agricultural and industrial sectors and in this area some of the specific proposals of the Berg Report might be found to be of value provided they did not run counter to the principles of equity and medium and long run convergence. Countries pursuing convergent strategies would also have a stake in a reformed international order which widened or stabilised markets for their production surpluses or made available greater amounts of cheaper or more flexible aid, for these would, in their case, support the strategy of convergence.

Thus countries adopting Thomas-type models of accumulation would not be opting out of the international system but rather altering, in a fundamental way, the terms of their participation in it. To the extent that a number of countries were pursuing convergence strategies they could greatly reinforce each others efforts. A liberated socialist South Africa and Namibia would, from this point of view, radically transform the possibilities for socialist accumulation in the whole African region.
The crisis in Africa is not likely to be short-lived and, over time, governments will come under increasing pressure to adopt strategies similar to those proposed in the Berg Report. It is important that, in the political struggles which will inevitably ensue, the left in Africa be seen to be offering a viable, equitable alternative that puts the needs of the people to the forefront. The convergence strategy would seem to be such an alternative around which people might be mobilised.

John Loxley

Bibliographic Note


Given the lack of general works on women in Sudan, the appearance of a book purporting to deal exclusively with this subject is, on the face of it, certainly a welcome occurrence. This should not, however, lead to an uncritical acceptance of the work and the images it presents of the lives of Sudanese women.

The book is a general work by two authors (one British and one Sudanese) which deals with aspects of the lives of both northern and southern Sudan. It deals with such issues as the influence of Islam on the lives of women, development of girls' education, the work of nurses and midwives, the women's movement, the rural scene, customs and folk medicine. As regards the south, the authors discuss educational developments, tribal institutions and town and country life.

Our main concern in reviewing such a book is to question the viability of the image it presents of Sudanese women, the methods by which that images was formed and the assumptions made about the Sudanese society in the process. Although not stated explicitly, the information included in the book appears not to have been the result of intensive empirical research but based rather on impressions gathered during visits to the Sudan and selective talks with some Sudanese women and British women previously employed by the colonial government (e.g. Dr Ina Beasley, Controller of Girl’s Education in Sudan during the 1940s). This lack of intensive field research has made the book broadly descriptive, lacking in both detailed analysis and specific theoretical framework by which data might be organised. However, the image presented of Sudanese women is clearly more than a simple matter of methodology. Rather it is related to certain assumptions made concerning Sudanese society.

Several such assumptions are discernable, and among these the most important
are the ideological ones. The first set relates to the author's view of colonisation and the role of the colonial system in the Sudan. The historical development of the Sudanese society since colonial times — the context within which Sudanese women exist — is not subjected to critical analysis. Rather, the colonial system is perceived as a neutral system of administration unrelated to the problem under study. It is accepted and praised, especially for its introduction of ameliorative policies and particularly those relating to the provision of health and educational services. Its pursuit of specific economic policies is not discussed at all, despite the fact that they were more important than health and educational policies, and central to the integration of Sudanese economy and society into the world capitalist system. It is therefore not surprising that the authors should come to the questionable conclusion that the British

... managed during their 50-odd years' rule to create lasting ties of mutual trust and respect in what proved to be one of their most effective run dependencies and successful (sic) experiments in colonisation.

Related to this uncritical acceptance and praise for the colonial experience in the Sudan, the work clearly exhibits the author's lack of understanding of the historical dynamics of Sudanese society and its specific features and underdevelopment problems, all of which are imperative for a true understanding of the position and conditions of Sudanese women. Numerous examples illustrate this lack of understanding. We are presented for instance with the following simplistic explanation of the differential situation of women in northern and southern Sudan.

It is the mode of dress of the women and the social attitudes governing their lives that one of the fundamental characteristics can be discerned between the two regions of Sudan.

And the effects of immigration to oil-rich Arab countries on women and their lives is summarised thus:

The dearth of trained personnel especially with the emigration of many Sudanese to the oil-rich Arab states acts in women's favour and enables them to rise rapidly provided that they are capable to positions of great authority.

In a similar simplistic vein, we are told that illiteracy is the most important problem faced by the Sudanese society. With this the authors appear to have reduced all Sudan's problems to the simple question of literacy and means of increasing it. The examples in this regard are numerous, but the most important thing to note is that they all clearly point in the direction of a lack of understanding of the dynamics and workings of Sudanese economy and society.

In addition, the authors present us with a conception of social change in Sudanese society, influenced by Western standards and primarily derived from the bourgeois assumption of an inevitable evolution of a 'traditional' ideal type into an 'advanced' Western society and culture. Thus words such as 'modern' and 'progressive' are frequently utilised to describe behaviours which the authors depict as being clear indications of radical social change in Sudanese society. These behaviours include employment of women as hostesses and waitresses, a reduced inclination to wear the tobe, and the behaviour of a few selected women in opposing the hegemony of the extended family. The 'causes' of such social change are stated to be partly due to increased male education and changes in male attitudes.

The above points relate to the authors' general approach (or lack of it); next, we look at specific aspects of the image they present of Sudanese women. The first
thing to emphasise is the authors' treatment of women as a unitary category, paying no attention to the fact that women are divided in accord with their differential positions in the production process into distinct social classes. The authors do recognise two types of differences, however, the first in respect to region and the second, educational attainment. They differentiate, for example, between women in the north and women in the south, though without trying to explain the historical reasons for these differences, especially as regards the uneven development of colonial capitalism in various parts of the country. A second regional difference recognised by the authors, is that between women in rural areas and those in the towns. Once again the explanation of these differences is left at the geographical level. They are not adequately analysed within the framework of regional inequalities and the historical processes undergoing their development and reproduction.

The final difference between women that is recognised is a superstructural one relating to the difference between educated and uneducated women. This like the others is only treated in relation to the various social attitudes adhered to by both categories of women, without considering the real reasons for these differing attitudes, which are, after all, not really the product of education, but of the specific social structure of the Sudanese society, of which education itself is only a product.

The consequence of treating women as a unitary category (apart from the relatively unimportant differences recognised) is that we are consistently presented with behaviours and practices relating only to urban middle class families (see especially the chapters on customs and folk medicine). The type of behaviours characterising poor women whether in urban or rural areas are virtually ignored. Thus, in relation to folk medicine there is a clear concentration on *Zar* ceremonies, which are increasingly becoming, practically and exclusively, middle class phenomenon due to their exhorbitant costs by way of clothes, jewellery, food and drink.

A second point relating to the image of Sudanese women presented in the book has an important political dimension. We are told that women have long suffered from inequalities and discrimination and that the major improvement in their social standing has come after May 1979, when the present government promulgated certain policies and laws positively affecting the lives of women. The authors, thus, share the image of Sudanese women presently adopted by official government bodies such as Sudan Socialist Union (SSU) and Sudanese Women Union. This image is essentially that women should be 'integrated into national development', through entering the 'modern capitalist sector', and that women are already, by virtue of the legislation, 'emancipated' and have won most of their rights. The main tenets of this viewpoint are based on the formal political rights given to women and especially on the spread of Sudan Women's union branches all over the country. The authors uncritically accept the promulgation of such policies and practices as firm and clear indications of the much improved status and position of women post-1969. Thus, they state that:

The fact that the female half of the population has a political representation embodied in the socialist and Women's Unions means not only that women's opinion can be aired at country-wide level but that many women who otherwise would have scant opportunity to do so are able to engage in and gain experience of local and national politics. The proportion of women in political office and the decision-making process invites a healthy comparison.
What adoption of such views tends to neglect is that these policies have only affected the minority of women employed in the so-called 'modern sector'. The position of the majority of women has in fact been adversely affected by the wider economic policies adopted by the present government and nowhere near what can be called 'emancipation'. The effect of these policies has been to expand capitalist relations of production which in turn has altered the traditional roles played by women, though not necessarily in the direction of 'emancipation'. In the light of these changed roles, women have often had to enter wage employment in order to satisfy increasing cash needs stimulated by the expanding capitalist system. Or, alternatively, women have had to engage in petty commodity production to support husbands and brothers employed in the capitalist sector but earning wages insufficient to ensure their reproduction. All this, of course, has been over and above their domestic responsibilities within the household. The combinations of roles played by women during the past decade are countless. However, the main point to emphasise is that the image presented by the authors, and which is the same as that held by the present regime, is simplistic. By concentrating on the political benefits of a few policies they neglect the disadvantages of a multitude of others.

Thus, generally, in the work under review, the picture presented of Sudanese women is distorted and one-sided. It is based on certain unwarranted assumptions concerning both Sudanese society and Sudanese women.

El Wathiq M. Kamier and Zeinab B. El Bakri
Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Khartoum

The Political Thought of Amilcar Cabral: A Review Article*

Despite the apparently fragmentary nature of Cabral’s work — a set of speeches, essays and the ‘paravras’ — the view that we shall hear more about this man is not one, we believe, we hold in isolation. Despite the fact that initial commentaries on his work were rather blandly cast in the mould of ‘Cabral said this and it is nice’, ‘He differed from him on this’, etc., there has of late been a growing interest in situating Cabral’s work in a much broader theoretical perspective.

This interest, however, has been coupled with a recognition of an apparent problem with Cabral’s own work, which is seen as a gulf between Cabral’s theoretical explanation and the practical achievements of the struggle in Guiné. The inevitable result has been to cast Cabral’s work within the realm of individual attributes. This view has found its sharpest formulation in Chabal’s recent work in which this contradiction is resolved by making too rigid a distinction between Cabral’s theoretical work and his practical achievements. The argument is then made that Cabral should be seen merely as a product of his socio-economic environment with his theoretical work deserving no more attention than the amount of space it actually occupies in his life’s work.

This view may seem plausible in view of the fact that Cabral and his work issue from a social structure seemingly elusive to Marxist categories. The need to

*See end of text.
formulate original concepts entailed by the objective reality seems to be only partially met in Cabral’s work. While the mode of his thought seems firmly anchored in Marxist categories, analysts have been anxious to point out that he subjects the concepts to abuse by arriving at conclusions totally foreign to them. It follows thus that, in McCulloch’s book, the innocent conclusion is reached that Cabral begins from Marxist categories only because he wants to demonstrate their irrelevance to his objectives.

One important concept that has been found to be particularly ambiguous from a Marxist viewpoint is Cabral’s concept of the ‘revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie’. There is also a further problem with the concept of ‘marginal class’ which Cabral uses to distinguish the structural position of the colonial from the European petty-bourgeoisie. This latter concept, which gained currency in Underdevelopment and Dependency Theories, has been declared unoperational by Poulantzas, who believed that its formulation merely reflected a lack of theoretical sophistication on the part of its exponents.

It is thus on the basis of the apparently loose character of Cabral’s formulations that Chabal’s thesis leads him into denying Cabral a theoretical status. The logical conclusion that follows is that, while Cabral’s practical achievements are duly praised, the theoretical aspects of his work are ignored.

Though Chabal’s thesis has been researched in a manner that deserves commendation, the arguments that would validate such an interpretation seem rather thin, being chiefly restricted to the paucity of theoretical constructions in Cabral’s work. Yet this cannot be said to be particular to Cabral but may as well be said of Lenin or Mao. However, in an earlier article and in the thesis on which this book is based, Chabal seems to have drawn inspiration for his conclusion from Clapham’s work, in which the lofty assertion was made that it was folly to construct socio-political theories from the utterances of African political leaders if only for lack of scope.

It is against this background that McCulloch’s work marks a major departure. Apart from trying to demonstrate the unity between the theoretical texts and the practical execution and achievements of the struggle, he tries to situate Cabral’s work in relation to various strands of political thinking and, in particular, contemporary Marxist thought. In this attitude, he sees Cabral’s ideas as going beyond both Guinea Bissau and his own immortal existence. The work has the added merit that it is a critical inventory, which is all the more valuable since McCulloch believes that Cabral has something of great value to say, and which is indeed the reason for his writing the book.

While emphasising the merits, McCulloch pays particular attention to exposing serious flaws in Cabral’s work. To achieve this, he explores how far the concepts employed by Cabral sufficiently dealt with the problems that concerned him, such as the problems of historical change, the state, the nature of the imperialist relationship, etc. Some of the conclusions arrived at merit mention here and particularly the observation that Cabral’s work lacked coherence or a unifying principle. On the one hand, the lack of theoretical rigour is identified in Cabral’s lack of a conceptual distinction between state and class power; and his failure to furnish a social analysis of the connection between the internal social structure of neo-colonial situations and the interests of finance capital. Moreover, it is observed that despite all claims that national liberation struggle was equal to a
social revolution, there is a tendency in Cabral to view neo-colonialism as inevitable. On the other hand, a problem of inadequacy of concepts is identified, exemplified by Cabral's taking a 'technocratic' view of productive forces and viewing the concept in total isolation from his other ideas.

To analyse the implications of the issues raised would require more time and space than is available. For this reason we shall deal only with those problems that can be managed within the compass of this review.

The first one relates to the manner in which the subject has been treated which results in the portrayal of Cabral's work as a bundle of contradictory notions. Yet this could be seen as more the result of the methodological procedure adopted than the incoherence of the work itself. While the concepts are analysed in relation to proper interpretation and with reference to various schools of thought, each idea is treated in isolation from the others, with no attempt made to demonstrate their inter-relationship. If the latter procedure had been adopted, the conclusions that would have been drawn from Cabral's work would have been different.

This methodological procedure is in large part a consequence of the misinterpretation of some key concepts in Cabral's writings. This is seen most clearly in the extrapolation of the concept of revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie. McCulloch gives the concept of 'marginal class' a particularly surprising interpretation by treating it largely in terms of the psychology of the colonial petty-bourgeoisie. The fact that the colonial petty-bourgeoisie could aspire to the cultural life of the coloniser 'marks its social experience as unique' (McCulloch p.77). Its marginal status is attributed to the fact that it was an in-between class, torn between the culture of the colonised and the coloniser, in which, 'the choice of cultural styles becomes traumatic' (McCulloch p.77). The result of this mode of theorisation is either, as in Chabal, to emphasise the morality of Cabral as a person, or as with McCulloch, to introduce voluntarist elements in the discourse by recourse to the psychology of the individual members of that class.

In order to understand that there is nothing in Cabral's treatment of the petty-bourgeoisie that would warrant this mode of interpretation, we wish to draw attention to the two fundamental definitions of the petty-bourgeoisie in his work. These definitions are not original to Cabral but are already to be found in Marx. The first one is the conception of the petty-bourgeoisie as an indecisive force owing to its incapacity to sustain an intellectual position on its own. Marx frequently uses this mode of definition in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* and *Class Struggles in France*, from which Lukacs was to derive the conclusion that oscillation was a characteristic of classes in transition. There is a second definition in which the petty-bourgeoisie is seen as a necessary or functional component in a system of exploitation, as is done by Carchedi and Poulantzas. Cabral emphasises either meaning depending on the object of his enquiry, as can be seen from a comparison of his essays on 'Social Structure' and 'Culture and Identity'.

In 'Social Structure', Cabral is not referring to the petty-bourgeoisie as defined by social status or skills but is rather describing the national liberation struggle as being petty-bourgeois in character, or (as he puts it) 'lacking in ideology', which Cabral attributed to the failure to base the struggle on social reality. The revolutionary potential in such a situation lay in the virtual absence of entrenched
reactionary classes while the effect of foreign capital would have led to the birth, in various degrees, of vanguard classes such as the urban and rural proletarians and other alert sections of the population. Cabral identifies the vanguard classes in the case of Guiné as comprising sections of wage earners, a section of the lumpen proletariat, some intellectuals and 'even some peasants'. It is to the coalescence of these forces to which the concept revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie is related.

When Cabral defines the petty-bourgeoisie in functional terms, which he does in 'Culture and Identity', he seems to be concerned with the problem of alliances in which he tries to pinpoint the factors with which to identify the various strata/classes both as allies and in opposition to one another. Hence he employs the concept of revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie in a limited sense to refer to a section of the class that was nationalist. The failure to draw out these two meanings leads McCulloch to see in 'Culture and Identity' merely an autobiographical sketch, thus depriving the work of any theoretical value.

In order to appreciate the problems posed by McCulloch's interpretation, let us refer to Cabral's concept of culture. While McCulloch correctly points out that in Cabral culture did not have a simple causal relationship with production, he expunges this from his interpretation by seeing in Cabral an involuntary mechanistic division between class and culture. That Cabral maintains an implacable class posture in this can be seen in his dialectical conception of culture which he sees as embodying mainly two elements: namely, a material and a practical component. Thus, culture was not to be reduced to mere contemplation or be seen as a mirroring element, since while it expresses ideas as social reality it also furnishes the need to change that reality. As a material element in the social totality, an operative factor of social reality itself — a social force — culture has to be understood as being both a product and a factor of the social historical formation. It was for this reason that for Cabral culture always exhibits both a negative and a positive aspect.

From this perspective, it is difficult to see the rationale behind the criticism that a contradiction exists in Cabral in that he sees culture as being conducive to revolutionary nationalism while in the same breath arguing that culture was beleaguered when tied to repressive political structures. Nor is the claim that he does not furnish a basis for the ideology and consciousness of the peasantry at all plausible. The expression of culture presupposed a certain level of consciousness which Cabral sees in their resoluteness and their capability to learn and change things, which he considered was invaluable to classes such as the petty-bourgeoisie that were based outside production.

The difficulty that would arise in reading these texts would be if one began from the view of consciousness as a function of the category of social labour which Cabral is rejecting. Consciousness was a function of the social totality as such, and such factors as sight become major elements at the very heart of defining class posture. Thus the lumpen, the workers and the petty-bourgeoisie develop a subjective attitude earlier than the peasantry on the basis of their being able to compare. It is in appreciation of the principle of social totality that Cabral rejected any causal relationship between culture and production in the first place.

There is an apparent abandonment of class categories in Cabral when he deals at the level of alliances. But this seems to have been a feature of Marx and Lenin's
work on the same subject. They tend to give the view that classes can acquire unity on the level of politics which it cannot acquire at the level of production seen in their formulation of the concept of alliances and stages of development in the struggle. Thus, in both Marx and Lenin, the peasant-worker alliance was based on their relationship to the state, i.e. that they shared a common interest in its abolition, despite the fact that by ownership criteria their interests were mutually opposed. Again, they adhered to the view that the land problem among the peasantry could only be solved by a proletarian revolution, hence justifying proletarian leadership. There is also some element in both which tends to suggest that a class struggle normally has to begin with certain petty-bourgeois characteristics. This could be seen in their view that the concept of revolutionary proletariat has nothing to do with numbers as such, given that in France or Russia the proletariat was small compared to the mass of peasants and artisans. Thus fidelity to the objectives of the struggle was important. Lenin has to declare openly that the struggle against feudalism was to be immediately followed by a period in which the proletarian party asserted itself in order to combat ‘peasant and petty-bourgeois inconsistencies’.

It was on the same terrain that Cabral sought to probe into the problem of alliances and instead of coming up with the revolutionary proletariat comes up with revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie. Because this was done after the event, it bore a large resemblance to a descriptive text which has been mistaken for an autobiographical one.

Cabral locates the unity of the various strata on their common objective situation as victims of colonial domination. In this respect he follows Marx by defining the petty-bourgeoisie as a class on the basis that class interest is normally prior to the physical organisation of the class. This was to show that their interests were opposed to those of other classes. Here already he tends to view the problem of interests as being internal, as between those of the petty-bourgeoisie and those of the peasantry.

In his investigation of what was the basis of class or group identity, he arrived at the priority of economic interest. Cabral takes these two classes in turn and tries to see what factors undermined their particular economic interests. Though the peasantry shared a common economic situation and reacted in several forms against exploitation, their unity was not immediately apparent. However, Cabral was optimistic that the unity of the peasantry based on common economic situation could be achieved as the struggle unfolded, because the dislocations manifested in the class were mainly on the level of the social structure, not at the economic level. Thus, levels of integration and dependency on colonialism, authority patterns, differences in locality, age etc., were some of the factors which Cabral argued could be steadily overcome as the masses came better to appreciate the objective situation. From the point of view of social structure, rather than denying tribal identity as a negative factor in the struggle, Cabral emphasised its existence, but only denied that it could be superior to economic identity.

As for the petty-bourgeoisie, Cabral distinguishes them from the European one on the basis of the level of integration based on the nature of colonial conflict. Because in Europe the class struggle though remaining ‘uninterrupted’ was ‘hidden’, the petty-bourgeoisie is defined by function in a system of exploitation. This luxury is not afforded the colonies since colonial domination was
characterised by open conflict, or as Cabral terms it, by 'a state of siege'. Thus the colonial petty-bourgeoisie is always forced to choose a side in the conflict which made such factors as personal experience, acculturation, upbringing, exposure etc., important in the determination of political posture. Cabral always refers to this as a political process.

Although McCulloch raises important issues which any discussion of Cabral must come to grips with, if Cabral's analysis of the character of the struggle and possible alliances was inadequate, it is certainly not for the reasons he gives us. In our view, a correct understanding of the concept of revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie may provide the key to understanding the context in which Cabral may have treated the other concepts. This is so because in Cabral the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie is a transforming agent, hence his concern with the state, historical change and future evolution, in short, with transformation of modes of production.

Cabral was concerned with determining the role of social classes and the state in this transformation. In this treatment it is true that Cabral seems to portray the state as something to be embraced, as 'functional' to development, while at other times he sees it as a mere apparatus. But this is not evidence of inconsistency but of levels of approach. The fact that Cabral's remarks seem straightforward, has been largely responsible for hiding the complexity of the issues he tries to analyse.

McCulloch identifies three views on the state in Cabral. The first is that he viewed it normally as a mere apparatus. Secondly, there is the view that he saw it as neutral and lastly, that he viewed it as functional to the development of society. While the first view was a result of the experience of war, the latter two views are seen as being Cabral's main conception of the state owing to his lack of a theoretical distinction between state power and class power. The conclusion is then drawn that Cabral's view of the state was similar to that of the modernisation theory of Apter and Coleman, with the only difference that where they employ the term 'elite' Cabral uses 'class'.

As indicated earlier, lack of space will restrict our comments to merely indicating the main points of Cabral's conception of the state. To begin with, Cabral's view of the state is Marxist in the strict sense and has no functional elements about it. Like in Marx, Cabral argues that political power is based on economic capacity, not on the mere wielding of the instruments of the state. In the analysis of the state, Cabral argues that both the nature of the state as it relates to the particular mode of production in that society and the class that wields the state must be analysed jointly. In the analysis of the state, its nature must be analysed first and then the class that wields the state secondly. This is not to mean that the class that wields the state is a secondary matter, a view that seems to have been put forward by Poulantzas. Though Poulantzas correctly pointed out that the state always expresses interests related to a fundamental conflict located at the economic level, and not of those people who physically staff the state, he reaches the conclusion that the analysis of the nature of this class was inconsequential.

In Cabral, the class that wields the state must form an integral part of a proper conceptualisation of the state, especially under colonialism, where the nature of the national liberation struggle, which we have said had petty-bourgeois characteristics in its origins, made it possible for classes that were not located at
the economic level to wield political power. The ascendency of the petty-bourgeoisie to political power was not a function of superior skills, as in McCulloch, but was a result of a form of struggle in which the problem of the state is not correctly posed. This is a more reasonable interpretation given the paucity of the number of people with any skills in the Portuguese colonies, and worse still, in the Belgian colonies.

It is true that Cabral does not employ the distinction between state and class power since he did not view this concept as a principle of explanation. Indeed the value of this concept is in doubt, especially where it is employed to either explain politics in terms of a complex power relation or to demonstrate that the ruling class actually rules. This is seen more closely in the theory of the post-colonial state which used the concept of relative autonomy to try and account for the reproduction of a dominant class but one not based in the economy. The results from this mode of analysis have been rather curious with the surprising conclusion that the state expresses the interests of the class that wields political power. In Cabral, the nature of the state was dependent on the nature of the class struggle. This is not to deny that he did not see the importance of purely political factors. Indeed his conception that the state under colonial conditions commands history, was in recognition of this very fact. But that was a result of the complex class struggle which, he argues, was muted.

This is not to say that Cabral viewed the state merely as an effect. Instead, the class struggle determined the way in which the state conditions the development of the productive forces. In defining the productive forces, Cabral does not take a technocratic definition of them but rather their development is reflected in 'transformation in the direction of increasing complexity of the characteristics of the mode of production; sharpening class differentiation with the development of the bourgeoisie and intensification of the class struggle' (Cabral (1980) p.127).

In analysing Guinea in relation to the mode of conditioning by the state and its effect on the productive forces, Cabral reached several conclusions. Firstly, for agriculture to develop, there was a need to raise to a social level the significance that this activity had on the economic level. It was this which the colonial state was incapable of achieving; thus, as McCulloch says, 'it was a state without function'. There are some ways in which Cabral seems to argue that social production did not justify the existence of the colonial state. Instead, he seems to argue that its existence was inimical to the reproduction of labour power. To resolve this problem required the creation of an entirely different state based on the material conditions of the country. Thus, the argument that Cabral saw no necessary reason to destroy the colonial state as a precondition for building socialism put forward by McCulloch is merely imagined.

Angel Mwenda Mukandabantu

Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People’s War by Patrick Chabal

The works by Amilcar Cabral referred to are as follows:
Unity and Struggle (London: Heinemann, 1980).

Three books from such different perspectives on similar issues reflects, one must assume, the vigour of current debate on women, the family and marriage in Zimbabwe. Chigwidere’s text arose from a television debate about lobola (bridewealth): do bridewealth payments subordinate women to men and should they be abolished in socialist Zimbabwe? In the past, he argues, lobola signified all the payments made to secure the services of a bride, of which the issue of children was the most important: ‘The husbands buy the services of their wives and not the wives themselves’ (p.4). The abundant ethnographic data seems to support his case: the ‘traditional African’ possessed a positively actuarial skill in totting up the value of her various services in the series of payments that constituted lobola and paying up to those who had inculcated skills in the woman. Rusabo payment, for example, bought the services of a wife as cook, laundress, farm labourer, sexual companion and general domestic support (p.10). If she wasn’t good enough ‘both the husband and relatives kicked dust in her eyes. They could even return her to her home for more education and if this failed to improve her, divorce could follow’. Chigwidere is against abolition, but strongly in favour of purifying lobola which has turned into an institution for the exortation of fathers/sons-in-law. But while a wife was and is not a slave, he is in no doubt either that marriage subordinated women: ‘It is unthinkable that the African man will ever accept the idea of being second to his wife ... it will in practice (n)ever be possible to establish total equality between husband and wife’ (p.54). The issue is not really lobola, therefore, but marriage. Has the absence of bridewealth in Britain ensured total equality between husband and wife? The answer, we must agree, is no.

Joan May addresses herself directly to this problem insofar as the law she discusses concerning women is family law. She argues that the status of women in the family has deteriorated under colonialism because there has been a ‘cultural lag’ between the social institutions of the present day and the customary law applied by the courts in most matters of family life. Subsequent chapters deal in detail with the status of Shona women in pre-colonial society, and the consequences of the legal minority status of women in relation to property, marriage, divorce, children and widowhood. A final chapter compares post-independence family legislation in other African countries and contains an argument in favour of using law as a progressive force to favour women’s equality ‘as an essential condition for developing the full potential of women as participants in the total development effort’. The problems she anticipates in implementing such legislation seem to lie mainly in the lack of a trained judiciary and an educated and informed population. These have not, however, accounted for the failure of Sex Discrimination legislation in Britain. The book contains fascinating case study material and some of the legislative recommendations have already been achieved, such as the Legal Age of Majority Act. ‘Cultural lag’ cannot account, however, for the specific oppression of women as members of an oppressed race in colonial Zimbabwe.

The latter issue is to some extent confronted by Weinrich. A Christian Marxist,
she argues that the African family has been deprived of its function as the economic base of society and consequently its traditional continuity and stability has been undermined by 'the class alliance of Christianity with the petty bourgeoisie in Zimbabwe' (p.17). Central to its petty bourgeois ideology is the nuclear family of father, mother and a few children. The Christian Church has failed to recognise the culture bound nature of its theology and practice in its (not always comfortable) alliance with capitalism and has failed to provide the conditions for liberation. She traces the history of Colonial State and Church intervention in the family, notably with very interesting chapters on past campaigns to limit African fertility and the Church’s opposition to polygamy, which has nevertheless developed as an instrument of women’s exploitation under capitalism. Liberation theology, she argues, is not antithetical to socialism and the churches must find their role in revealing injustice and oppression.

The purification of traditional marriage practices; social engineering in favour of women’s equality; the transformation of the African family as a progressive force in socialist Zimbabwe: there is not much in common between these agendas.

* * *


As the title implies, this is more than an annotated bibliography; four hundred references on Tanzanian women and development are analytically reviewed in such a way that the content and tone of recent debates in Tanzania are vividly conveyed to the reader. The coverage is encyclopedic with sections on women’s struggles as peasants and workers, the nature of their class and sexual oppression, their economic and political participation, how they are affected by and affect ideology, the education and legal systems, women’s biological reproduction and sexuality, family and domestic labour, health and nutrition. By situating these topics within an overall analytical framework which in turn is related to Tanzania’s social and political development and recent economic crisis, the bibliography becomes a discovery in itself. There are disadvantages in creating such a total effect. The authors raise many contentious points in passing and several references are not strictly on the topics covered, containing pertinent points, but too indirect for inclusion. In other words, the book suffers from disproportionate weighting of the material being presented.

Nonetheless, the authors have achieved a very interesting, engaging and thorough presentation of women's issues that should be relevant not only to those with specific interest in Tanzanian women, but Third World women generally as well as those following Tanzanian development generally. Hopefully, this book may establish a precedent for the publication of more detailed up-to-date documentation of on-going debates in African countries. Until recently such debates usually surfaced in printed form as mimeographed papers with limited circulation. Now in the face of drastic budget cuts and paper shortages in today’s recession-ridden Third World, they often do not get documented at all; an ironic if not tragic happenstance in view of the need for broader and heightened awareness of the sharpened social contradictions at just such times.

Deborah Fahy Bryceson

David and Marina Ottaway have their reasons for choosing the term 'Afrocommunism'. They use it to characterise those African states propounding Marxism-Leninism as distinct from the 'African socialist' states which generally preceded them historically. Whilst it is undoubtedly useful to distinguish between these two groupings, it is my contention that the concept is both misleading and unhelpful, although the book itself is a useful addition to the literature on the socialist project in Africa. The concept 'Afrocommunism' is explicitly drawn from a prior notion of Eurocommunism. An explicit parallel is made between the two, in particular concerning the rejection of the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty and a strong determination to maintain national autonomy and sovereignty. Whilst agreeing with this, a fundamental difference between the two is that Eurocommunism was an explicit breakaway from the Stalin model previously adhered to by the Western European communist parties.

By contrast, the so-called Afrocommunist states, notably Mozambique, Angola and Ethiopia, had never adopted the Stalin model, hence they did not have to re-fashion their politics and policies in the same way. Furthermore, Eurocommunism is based upon a notion of a common cultural similarity and system. Are the social structures and political economy of Ethiopia and Mozambique, say, equally comparable? Not only do the histories and class structures of these two countries differ, but the routes to power of the two revolutionary movements were totally dissimilar. In the case of Ethiopia there was a coup from above by a left-wing group of military officers, whereas in Mozambique a protracted national liberation struggle was fought from below. To this day, only the latter and not the former has a vanguard party. There is much to distinguish the African Marxist states from the Eurocommunist ones, therefore, and in their turn much to distinguish one African Marxist state from another.

However, I would agree with the Ottaways in drawing a distinction between African Marxist states and the 'African socialist' ones. The authors argue that the first distinction is an ideological one, as the former adopt an explicitly Marxist theory based on class struggle as the motor force of change rather than a belief in a primitive classless society alleged to have existed prior to colonisation. A second difference concerns foreign policy, with African socialist states upholding Panafricanism and non-alignment. For the Marxist states, according to these authors, Panafricanism has been virtually dropped and non-alignment is defined more in terms of a common set of interests with the socialist countries in opposition to imperialism and neo-colonialism. A third difference is the more carefully thought out stages of transformation and change by the Marxist states. Fourthly, these states are much less personalised and dependent on a single leader than the socialist ones, and there is a much greater continuity both of policies and political structures. Finally, the Marxist regimes are much more openly statist in their approach, in particular regarding the economy. The authors admit that the distinctions are not always hard and fast ones and that transitional societies also exist, in that certain African socialist societies did move towards a greater acceptance of the need for a vanguard party and the existence of class differences. One beautiful quotation from the pen of Nkrumah is cited, written after his overthrow in 1966: 'an idyllic African classless society (in which
there were no rich and poor) enjoying a drugged serenity is certainly a facile
simplification; there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for any such
society. I am afraid the realities of African society are somewhat more sordid'.

Whilst the book draws out some interesting similarities between the African
Marxist states, there are obvious dangers in taking these too far. Each
movement is stubbornly determined to develop its own interplay of theory and
practice, for to do otherwise would spell disaster on the ground. Each country
has its own very unique set of circumstances. To apply the term 'communist' first
of all implies a replication of a model devised elsewhere and brings with it a
burdensome and not necessarily helpful ideological heritage. To go beyond this
and apply the term 'Afrocommunist' implies both an incorrect parallel with
Eurocommunism and a spurious level of conformity between the African Marxist
states. The term is unlikely to enter the political lexicon.

Barry Munslow

* * *

The Politics of Basic Needs: Urban Aspects of Assaulting Poverty in Africa
by Richard Sandbrook, Heinemann, 1982, 250pp., £5.95.

A Third World Proletariat? by Peter Lloyd, George Allen and Unwin, 1982,
139pp., £3.95.

Both of these books examine the role of the urban poor (and particularly the
working class) in the political economy of the post-colonial state. In their
ideology, their methodology, and their standard of analysis, however, they are
very different.

Sandbrook's analysis revolves around two fundamental questions: Why does
poverty persist in Africa? and How might it be eradicated? Answering the first
question, the author demonstrates that Africa's material deprivation derives
from the distorted pattern of peripheral capitalist development which has taken
place throughout the continent. Dependent urbanisation, urban over-population,
dependent industrialisation, and an involuntary informal sector are the poverty-
producing legacies of colonialism, perpetuated in the post-colonial era by the
external relations of African states and by their internal class structures.

Sandbrook insists, though, that these features of the state in Africa are not
unchangeable or over-determined. Moving on to answer his second question, the
author argues that poverty could be eliminated by means of 'basic needs'
development strategies which redistribute income, reorient production systems,
and provide equitable access to improved public services.

Sandbrook takes a realistic view of such strategies. Some 'basic needs'
programmes, such as that promoted by the World Bank, are fundamentally
conservative and offer no hope for a genuine assault on poverty. Others, such as
the ILO's World Employment Programme, are more radical but tend towards
utopianism since they fail to construct a concrete strategy of change which
recognises the political dimension of the poverty problem. For Sandbrook, the
eradication of poverty is inseparable from the question of progressive political
change. Any real assault on mass poverty will require a profound restructuring of
human relations which permanently deprives Africa's dominant classes and their
foreign allies of the privileges they currently enjoy. Such a restructuring, of
course, demands a class struggle.
This conclusion leads Sandbrook to pose another question: 'Who is going to be the carrier of a poverty eradicating development strategy?' By means of an extensive class analysis of urban Africa, the author concludes that if any social group can perform this task, then it is the working class. He argues that the process of proletarianisation that has taken place in Africa is limited in many ways, and yet it has produced a working class with a political consciousness that transcends economism and which cannot legitimately be described as a privileged labour aristocracy. The mobilisation of the working class will not, he admits, be easy. Numerous features of the socio-economic and cultural milieu of urban Africa inhibit the development of radical working class activism, while the dominant classes of the state and their allies have at their disposal a wide range of social and political control mechanisms which they can use to preserve the status quo. Nevertheless, 'national working classes are growing in size and stability and sections of these have, under special conditions, developed a radical, though non-revolutionary class consciousness'. Cautiously, Sandbrook concludes that 'their influence on development strategies in the future may therefore not be negligible'.

The broad outlines of this argument sound familiar enough, but the scholarly and political commitment which the author brings to this work are all too rare. Sandbrook's argument is consistent, subtle and lucid, a testament to his extensive fieldwork in East and West Africa and to the extremely wide range of theoretical and empirical literature which has formed his analysis. In the course of his examination Sandbrook raises several new and neglected issues for discussion and simultaneously provides a masterly survey of the principal debates within the existing literature on African urban political economy. The book will therefore not only act as a stimulus to other scholars working in this field, but will also be of immense value for teaching purposes. Some readers will undoubtedly feel frustrated by the author's purely urban focus, while others will lament his concentration on the 'political' rather than the 'economic' dimension of poverty and its eradication. Despite these self-imposed limitations, Sandbrook's intelligent and dogma-free analysis is a very welcome addition to the rapidly growing body of literature on the political economy of urban Africa.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to be so enthusiastic about Peter Lloyd's A Third World Proletariat?, a new volume in Allen & Unwin's 'Controversies in Sociology' series. Like Sandbrook, Lloyd starts his book with a question: 'Is there in the cities of the Third World, a proletariat?' By the end of the Introduction though, the question has been changed. Now Lloyd asks, 'In what respects are the urban poor like our conception of a working class?' He continues, "Is our class terminology a valuable tool for analysis, or does it merely provide vague descriptive labels, replete with misleading connotations or slogans for political mobilisations (valueless if the recipients of the message do not understand it)?' As the tone of this quotation suggests, Lloyd uses a potentially valuable opportunity to survey the literature on urban class formation in the Third World to denigrate the wave of radical political economy which has submerged his own brand of liberal sociology in the last decade. Having curtly dismissed some Marxist scholars as 'armchair theorists' at the beginning of the book, Lloyd goes on to vulgarise the Marxist analysis of Third World social formations, and, by vulgarising it, to undermine it. Marxists scholars, we are told, have ignored the perceptions of the classes they identify in African and Latin American towns. They have, according to Lloyd, 'for a long time assumed the subordination of the
political sphere to the economic’, and have argued against the implementation of social and economic reforms in Third World cities on the grounds that ‘in ameliorating local conditions the ultimate protest against abject poverty is postponed’. Significantly, such accusations are never supported by specific examples, and Lloyd remains consistently oblivious of the possibility that non-Marxist sociology might have the function, if not the motive, of legitimating particular ideologies and socio-economic systems.

Ironically, Lloyd regularly utilises Marxist concepts and insights in his own analysis of Third World cities, but the conclusions he reaches are profoundly conservative. Parliamentary democracy, he asserts, has ‘spurred on the provision of social services such as health and education to the masses’, while workers in multinational companies are a ‘privileged strata’ enjoying high wages, good working conditions, regular holidays and other generous benefits. Less fortunate members of the urban community remain poor because they are ‘grossly underemployed ... their poverty derives from their low productivity’.

In contrast to Sandbrook’s cautious optimism, Lloyd dismisses the possibility of radical action by the urban poor or proletariat. The urban community, he argues, is achievement oriented, and its members have no desire to change the structure of society. When they take collective action, it is as part of competing kinship, ethnic, or residential groups. Only a minority of workers are unionised, and the unions are co-opted by the state or lack a radical leadership. Political parties in Africa and Latin America have proved no better equipped to mobilise the masses. Consequently, urban protest can continue indefinitely without ever seriously threatening the established order. Concluding his examination of the urban poor in the Third World, Lloyd suggests that ‘we as observers, must try to understand their experience of poverty’. As Sandbrook has demonstrated in his book, understanding is not enough; we must also seek a strategy to eliminate it.

Jeff Crisp


On first reading, the oddest thing about this book is its ending. The final chapter of the work, entitled ‘What is to be done?’ poses the following ‘alternative approaches to agriculture’: smallholder cash-cropping, capitalist farming, integrated rural development and rural emigration. What is odd is that clearly none of these is anything like an ‘alternative’ to what is presently happening in West African agriculture. Rather, the first three are tried (if not true) strategies for rural development and the fourth is a fact of life. Why they should be presented as anything else is not only a puzzle but, perhaps more importantly, a symptom of the unresolved contradictions of this book.

The book, as we are told by Hart, began life as USAID purchase order ‘REDSO/WA/79/169’, a report synthesising the literature on West Africa’s response to the rise of commercial agriculture’. Yet the work is clearly more than this. We are given a thoughtful introduction, a well-written if not uncontentious sketch of West African economic history, the promised survey of the literature and three chapters of analysis before the above said policy recommendations. The theoretical inspiration for the work is, we are told, ‘the tradition of classical
political economy, both liberal and Marxist' embracing Sir James Steuart, Mill, Marx, Lenin and W. Arthur Lewis. It is here that the book's difficulties begin, and it is here that a discussion of Hart's analysis of the problems of West African agriculture must begin as well. According to Hart:

The pre-classical tradition of economic thought reached its finest expression in the work of Sir James Steuart, whose *Principles of Political Economy* (1767) appeared nine years before Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Steuart, whose ideas have influenced much in my book realised that successful transition of an agricultural society lay in the hands of a benevolent and effective state — a conception to which he gave the name 'monarch'. In this recognition he was accompanied by his Italian, French and Spanish peers of the era from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution. This literature provides many fertile analogies for the study of modern underdevelopment, for the good reason that the pre-industrial economic structures familiar to these authors are nearer than any stage in the recent development of the industrialised West to present-day Third World conditions (pp.14-15).

Now this presents a few problems. Leaving aside the question of whether Hart is invoking an implicit neo-Rostovian argument in his casual positioning of stages of development in the West or for that matter in the Third World, Hart's use of Steuart as inspiration is totally bereft of any recognition that the latter was the last gasp of the 'political economy' of landlordism before the Ricardian onslaught against that class. The gist of Steuart's argument, as it concerns the work under review, was that a strong agricultural sector was necessary for the strength of the state. Thus the wise 'monarch' should intervene to maintain a regime of high food and raw material prices to encourage investment in the agrarian sector in order to guarantee the nation's and hence his own position and, no doubt, that of the landlord class as well. More of this later, but it is important to realise that Sir James was no disinterested seeker after science.

The second source of inspiration for this book is Max Weber. Hart writes:

Indeed the central proposition of this book may be said to be Weberian: namely, that successive political forms, both of state and of rural property and office, have been the determining influence restricting West Africa's development since it first came into contact with the Portuguese five hundred years ago. (p.15).

Adding Weber to Steuart, we now have the thesis of this work, which may be summarised as follows: West Africa's rulers are corrupt and hated men much of whose involvement in agricultural development is meant to secure or enhance their own positions; it would be easy to argue against any state intervention but such intervention is necessary to accomplish the pressing task of agrarian development and thus despite their despicable character and poor performance something positive must be said. We are back to Steuart addressing himself to the wise lord, and it is here that we begin to encounter serious problems. For there are important differences of historical context between Steuart's address to the 18th century 'monarch' and Hart's plea to 'enlightened opinion'. The most important of these differences is that West Africa in the late 20th century is not Britain in the 18th, nor are the rulers of West Africa's states in a position equivalent to that of the British landlord class of that period.

One can, however, draw some interesting parallels — West Africa's rulers derive the bulk of their incomes from rents (though these are often disguised) as did England's 18th century landlords and both share an endemic affection for corruption. However, the rulers of West Africa's states stand at the end rather than at the outset of the long historical process of the attack on landlordism and
landlords’ appropriations of rents. To put this another way and a bit more strongly, West Africa’s rulers (and its peasants) are the product rather than the inspiration for the attack on the appropriation of rents by a landlord class. The result of this attack, in economic terms, has been a continuous, if jagged, fall in the real price of agricultural commodities from nearly all sources on the world market over the last one-and-a-half centuries, and in political ones in much of West Africa a systematic attempt to halt the development of a landlord class during the period of colonial rule. The protagonists in this attack have been industrial capitalists originating in Europe and their merchant underlings. One result of this attack, among others, has been that West African states from at least the last quarter of the 19th century have been in a more or less continuous fiscal crisis. The primary cause of this fiscal crisis has been the appropriation of the bulk of the surplus produced by rural populations by merchants, industrialists, and more latterly by the state itself.

State intervention (what we now call ‘development’) arose precisely as a response to this fiscal crisis. Reaching critical mass as a result of the low produce prices and hence low state revenues of the ’30s, ‘development’ was nothing more nor less than an attempt by various colonial states to produce and market agricultural commodities more cheaply with the intention of maintaining world market shares and the state’s profit margins which appeared in the form of direct and indirect taxes. This policy reached its apogee in the 1940s with the beginnings of massive state intervention in marketing and production. More importantly, it was the structure which the new rulers acquired upon independence. These new rulers, however, had different aims in mind for the surplus which had accrued largely as a result of the statisation of export crop marketing. These aims differed — Nkrumah’s socialism, Houphuet’s capitalism — but the end result was the same. The states and the bureaucrats which controlled them became the de facto landlords of West Africa. Now Hart would like to see them (and presumably the USAID) become successful, modernising landlords.

Is this a reasonably historical possibility? I think not. First, the corruption Hart notes is both a very real and limitless cost of staying in power as is the bloated military. After these deductions and others like them, little remains for ‘development’ and even when ‘aid’ is taken into account. Second, any successful endeavour to transfer a portion of the rural surplus to a landlord or industrial class whose interests might be ‘modernising’ would confront the rulers of West Africa’s states with a real threat from precisely these groups, and most of these potentates are clever enough to realise that this is so. Finally, any real attempt by West Africa’s rulers to initiate development projects that worked would represent a net deduction from their immediate incomes and it is doubtful whether the ‘protestant ethic’ has penetrated very far into the region’s high-living elites.

My conclusion is that Hart’s address to enlightened opinion is doomed to fall on deaf ears. Moreover his plea lacks imagination. If there is a potential for change in West Africa, it will not come from the region’s present rulers nor from the USAID, but perhaps rather from a coalition of frustrated nationalist technocrats in alliance with peasants and workers, with leftists playing a minor role. If such a coalition is realised, and it already exists in embryo in a few countries, individuals
with Hart's obvious knowledge and skill may have a role to pay. Until such a moment, Lenin's old question is likely to be unanswerable.  

Robert Shenton

* * *


SADCC comprises the nine independent states of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, Namibia is expected to join at independence. The roots of SADCC lie in the desire of the 'Frontline States' to continue into peacetime and deepen the co-operation that developed during the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe war. In 1980, the Lusaka Declaration set out SADCC's major objectives: general regional co-operation to promote development and co-ordinated action to 'reduce dependence, particularly but not only, on the Republic of South Africa' (RSA). Since 1980, South Africa's escalating undeclared war on its neighbours has denied the region the peace and stability it required to pursue its development plans, and has drawn more SADCC members into the 'frontline'. This escalation of violence does not only affect SADCC, but is itself a response to SADCC, since, though SADCC's substantial achievements so far are limited in scope, its objectives pose a fundamental threat to the apartheid regime. South Africa's nightmare is that SADCC's somewhat fragile existence will develop into a real regional unity of purpose, that co-ordination of transport rehabilitation will set a precedent for regional planning in sectors such as minerals, water and energy, and that SADCC will present an attractive alternative for Western investment in the region. The failure of South Africa's political and diplomatic attempts to divide SADCC have forced it to resort to its enormous economic and military power. Such tactics, however, only reveal even more starkly the extent and implications of South Africa's regional domination, and thus constitute a compelling argument for SADCC making the reduction of dependence on South Africa its number one priority.

Tostensen thus reflects the changing situation in southern Africa, by concentrating on relationships of economic dependence in the region, rather than by attempting a comprehensive overview of SADCC. His research report for the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies is based on secondary material and has limited, though definite, objectives. Inevitably it therefore suffers from certain analytical problems and factual omissions. In addition, studies of southern Africa encounter a shortage of reliable and up-to-date data. Most of the shortcomings of this report are recognised by the author himself, such as the problem of assessing the achievements and the likely trajectory of SADCC so early in its development and the absence of primary research. More important, as he accepts, is the level of analysis of the report, which sees states and, rather optimistically, SADCC, as the main political actors in the region, ignoring the role of class structures and class struggle. As Tostensen points out, this would require a great deal of fieldwork, but there is a need for a more comprehensive study that will analyse the dynamic relationship between dependence and internal class structure, in order to understand both the historical background and the internal, as well as external, obstacles to reducing dependence on the RSA.
The central section of the report, on ‘dependency relationships’ in the region, employs ‘asymmetry’ and ‘interdependence’ to stress the variable bilateral nature of dependence and to identify possible areas of South African weakness, which is a consistent merit of the report. The concepts of ‘sensitivity’ and ‘vulnerability’, in attempting to identify the changing costs of, and policy responses to, dependence over time, seem only to re-state a false ‘long-run and short-run’ dichotomy that renders more difficult that dynamic use of dependence which Tostensen is keen to encourage. Data problems apart, the summary of economic dependence on the RSA, broken down sectorally, is clear as far as it goes, but a full understanding of the problems is impossible without a general economic and political background to the region, and the shortage of data since 1979 precludes an assessment of SADCC’s impact on it.

Two dangers that Tostensen highlights are particularly interesting. Firstly, SADCC’s concentration on the rehabilitation of transport systems inherited from colonialism may perpetuate and reinforce ‘neo-colonial’ patterns of trade and production and hinder intra-SADCC trade. Second, the reduction of dependence on the RSA may be replaced with new forms of dependence, probably on the ‘West’. The greatest dangers, however, are the present and future responses of the RSA to SADCC. Discussing how the RSA’s strategy is likely to develop, Tostensen suggests that ‘hegemonic’ monopoly capital, of whatever location, will prevail politically in the RSA and, to protect investments and expand markets in the region, will set strict limits to ‘de-stabilisation’ and will accept SADCC, while trying to draw its political ‘sting’. Further, monopoly capital intends ‘restructuring . . . even . . . abolishing (apartheid) in its present institutionalised and legalised form’. The RSA, he asserts, would then become acceptable to SADCC and relations between the two would change dramatically. These important conclusions are based only on a cursory discussion of the situation in the RSA, but more important, have enormous implications for the central theme of the book — the costs to SADCC of its dependence on the RSA and opportunities to alter the situation. Tostensen does not consider these implications. He intends, rather, to raise issues for further research and study.

On the whole, the report presents a useful introduction to the dominant problem facing SADCC and to SADCC’s history and institutions. It succeeds in provoking serious thought on dependence in the region and in identifying areas requiring urgent empirical research or new conceptual approaches. In addition, it makes a strong case for collective action as the only route by which most SADCC states can hope to radically improve their position of extreme structural dependence on the RSA. The lack of alternative strategy and the proximity of an aggressive common enemy, he implies, are SADCC’s greatest strengths.

Pete Phillips
Current Africana 25

Compilation date: January 1983. Compiled by Chris Allen.

Current Africana continues to live a rather precarious existence; I hope it will appear more regularly in the future.

A. GENERAL

1 Parfitt, T W  
   The Lomé Convention and the NIEO, ROAPE 22 (1981) 85-95

2 Hermele, K  
   Sweden and the Third World: development aid and capital involvement, ROAPE 23 (1983) 85-100

3 Waterman, P  

4 Barone, C A  

5 Ekekwe, E E  

6 Mouzelis N  

7 Heeger, G A & Albin, M  

8 Roux, C  

9 Zuk, G & Thompson, W R  

10 Higgott, R A  

11 Shanin, T  

12 Safa, H I & Leacock, E  
   Development and the sexual division of labour, Signs, 7, 2 (1981) 265-511

13 I.S.S.  
   Third World conflict and international security, Adelphi Papers (1981) 60pp

14 Caporaso, J A  

15 Goussalt, Y (ed)  
   Sociologie du developpement, Tiers Monde 90 (1982) 236-444

16 Wayne, J  
   Capitalism and colonialism in late C19th Europe, Stud. in Pol. Econ. 5 (1981) 79-106

17 Worsley, P  

18 Gordon-Ashworth, F  
   International commodity control. London: Croom Helm. 1983, 300 (see ch.10 on coffee; ch.11 on cocoa)

19 Limqueco, P & MacFarlane, B  

20 Kitching, G  
   Development and underdevelopment in historical perspective. London: Methuen, 1982, 224pp

21 Higgott, R  
   Political development theory. London: Croom Helm, 1983

22 Emmanuel, A  
   Appropriate or underdeveloped technology. Chichester: Wiley, 1982, 192pp

23 Chambers, R  

24 Hosmer, S T & Wolfe, T W  

25 Sumner, C (ed)  
### B. AFRICA GENERAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Foster, P</td>
<td>Education and social inequality in subsaharan Africa, <em>JMAS</em>,</td>
<td>18, 2 (1980), 201-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nixon, F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Bennell, P</td>
<td>The colonial legacy of salary structures in anglophone Africa,</td>
<td><em>Ibid.</em>, 127-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piche, W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilson, E J</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Dittoh, S</td>
<td>Green revolution or revolution?, <em>Ibid.</em>, 48-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Oculi, O</td>
<td>Food imperialism and African diplomacy in the 180s, <em>Ibid.</em>,</td>
<td>63-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Jorlin, Y</td>
<td>Les perspectives de developpement et de l'industrie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Morice, A</td>
<td>Quelques reflexions sur la situation de la recherche</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Lomé Convention: towards perpetuation of dependence or promotion of interdependence?, *Ibid.*, 658-72


Imperialism and the ‘national bourgeoisie’, *ROAPE* 22 (1981) 5-19


Diffusion and political change in post-colonial Africa: perspectives on unipartism and military intervention, *Cult. et Debt.*, 11, 3 (1979) 439-56


Transnationalists in Africa: some problems of research, *Ibid.*, 139-51


Great power economic competition in Africa: Soviet progress and problems, *J. Int. Affs.*, 34, 2 (1980/1) 259-68


100 Grahl-Madsen, A  De-colonisation and the modern view of a just war, *German Y/book Int. Law*, 22 (1979) 255-73


106 Nnoli, O  Ethnicity and the working class in Africa, *Ufahamu*, 10, 1/2 (1980/81) 61-88


116 Medard, J F  The underdeveloped state in tropical Africa: political chientelism or neopatrimonialism?, *Private patronage or public owner*, ed. C Clapham (London: Pinter, 1982), 162-92


*Aid or imperialism? West Germany in sub-Saharan Africa*. Boston Univ. ASC Working Paper 61, 1982, 30pp

*African cities and the church*. Brussels: Pro Vita Mundi


*Africa and the international system*. Lanham, Mass.: Univ. Press of America, 1982


*State and nation in the Third World*. Brighton: Harvester, 1982, 192pp

*Class struggles and national liberation in Africa*. Omenana, 1982


*State versus ethnic claims: African policy dilemmas*. Boulder:
Olorunsola, V A
(eds) Westview, 1983, 350pp

144 Braganca, A de & Wallerstein, I
151 Ul-Ianovskii, R A Present-day problems in Asia and Africa. Moscow: Progress, 1980, 239pp
162 Little, K L The sociology of urban women's image in African literature. Macmillan, 1980, 174pp
166 Bates, R H Essays on the political economy of rural Africa. CUP, 1982, 190pp
172 Bandmann, H The industrialisation of Africa. Wiesbaden: Campaigner Pubs, 1980, 244pp
REVIEW OF AFRICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

173 Mudimbe, V Y (ed)

174 Economist Intelligence Unit
Foreign direct investments and MNCs in sub-Saharan Africa: a bibliography. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1980

175 Onoh, J K

176 Grellet, G

3. WEST AFRICA

177 Riddell, J B
The process of proletarianisation as a factor in population migration in W Africa, Prog. Human Geog., 5, 3 (1981) 370-92

178 Gale, T S
Segregation in British W Africa, CEA 80 (1980) 405-507

179 Peil, M

180 Asante, S K B

181 Robson, P

182 Endruweit, G & Rissel, E
Soziale Profile politischer Eliten in Westafrica, Dritte Welt, 6, 1 (1978) 107-24

183 Audibert, J

184 Duru, R C

185 Freund, W M & Shenton, R W
Vent for surplus theory and the economic history of W African Savanna 6 (1977) 191-6

186 Peil, M

187 Hart, K
The political economy of W African agriculture. CUP, 1982, 272pp

188 Hiskett, M

189 Olusanya, G O

190 Uchendu, V C (ed)
Dependency and underdevelopment in W Africa. Leiden: Brill, 1980

191 Peil, M

3a NIGERIA

192 Whitaker, C S

192 Sklar, R L
Democracy for the Second Republic, Ibid., 14-16

194 Jospeh, R A
The ethnic trap: notes on the Nigerian campaign and elections 1978-79, Ibid., 17-23

198 Paden, J N
Islamic political culture and constitutional change in Nigeria, Ibid., 24-28

196 Carter, H M
Prospects for the administration of justice in Nigeria, Ibid., 29-34

197 Schatz, S P
Nigeria's petro-political fluctuations, Ibid., 35-40

198 Spiliotes, N J
Nigerian foreign policy and Southern Africa: a choice for the West, Ibid., 41-45
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Udoia, O E</td>
<td>Nigerian political parties: their role in modernising the political system 1920-66</td>
<td>J. Black Stud., 11, 4 (1981) 421-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aronson, D R</td>
<td>Capitalism and culture in Ibadan urban development</td>
<td>Urban Anthrop., 7 (1978) 253-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenton, R W &amp; Lennihan, L</td>
<td>Capital and class: peasant differentiation in N Nigeria</td>
<td>Peasant Stud., 0, 1 (1981) 47-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famoriyo, S &amp; Raza, M</td>
<td>The green revolution in Nigeria</td>
<td>Food Policy, 7, 2 (1982) 27-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olurunfemi, A</td>
<td>Effects of wartime trade controls on Nigerian cocoa traders and producers</td>
<td>IJ AH S, 13, 4 (1980) 672-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absiekong, E M</td>
<td>Pledging oil palms: rural credit on Nigeria</td>
<td>ASR, 24, 1 (1981) 73-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milewski, J J</td>
<td>Capitalism in Nigeria and problems of dependence</td>
<td>Dependency theory, ed. D Seers (London; Pinter, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsipis, K</td>
<td>Nigeria's nuclear potential</td>
<td>The arms race in the 1980s, ed., D Carlton &amp; C Schaerf (Macmillan, 1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogbu, J U</td>
<td>Education, clientage and social mobility: caste and social change in the US and Nigeria</td>
<td>Social inequality, ed. G D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


259 Berry, S S *Oil and the disappearing peasantry: accumulation, differentiation and underdevelopment in W Nigeria*. Boston Univ. ASC WP 66, 1982, 17pp


269 Williams, D *President and power in Nigeria: the life of Shehu Shagari*. London: Cass, 1982, 256pp


274 Akinyemi, A B et al. (eds.) *Readings in federalism*. Lagos: NIIA, 1979, 444pp


276 Otta, N *Rebels against rebels*. Lagos: Manson, 1981 (Biafra)


282 Ozigi, A  

283 Van Apeldoorn, G J  
*Perspectives on drought and famine in Nigeria.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1981, 192pp

284 ILO  
*First things first: meeting the basic needs of the people of Nigeria.* Geneva: ILO, 1981

285 Nnoli, O (ed.)  
*Path to Nigerian development.* Dakar: Codesira, 1981, 264pp

286 Onoh, J K  
*Nigeria’s oil economy.* London: Croom Helm, 1983, 192pp

287 Graham & Trotman  
*Major companies of Nigeria.* London: Graham & Trotman, 1981, 284pp

288 Dickie, A  

289 Metra Consulting  

290 Kayode, F  

291 Obinna, O E  

292 Ajayi, S I  

3b GHANA

293 Mensah, K  
The December intervention and the current situation in Ghana, *Race & Class,* 24, 1 (1982) 71-78

294 Pieterse, J  

295 Jeffries, R  

296 Hansen, E  

297 Crisp, J  

298 Kennedy, P  

299 Rothchild, D  

300 Rothchild, D  

301 Rothchild, D & Gyimah-Boadi, E  

302 Hettne, B  

303 Kraus, J  

304 Meredith, M  
The broken dream, *Sunday Times Mag.,* 7.3.82, 21-31

305 Gray, P S  

306 Azad, A  

307 Weis, L  

308 Hansen, E  

309 Grier, B  
ORDER FORM

Subscription (Any 3 issues from No.23 on)

UK & Africa
Individuals 1 yr. £6 2 yrs. £11
Institutions £14 £25

Elsewhere
Individuals £7/US$15 £13/US$27
Institutions £16/US$35 £25/US$60

Students £4.50 Sterling only

Airmail Rates
Europe £3 £6
Elsewhere £5/US$10 £10/US$20

Please start/continue my sub with issue .

Single Copies
Numbers 1-5 (reprints) £2.50 each £5 each
Numbers 6-19 £1.50 each £3 each
Numbers 20-26 £2.50 each £5 each

SPECIAL OFFER (Nos.1-22)
Full Set £27
Any 3 £4

BOOKS FROM ROAPE

State & Society in Nigeria £3.25
Behind the War in Eritrea £3.50
African Socialism in Practice —
  The Tanzanian Experience £2.95
(All prices include postage)

TOTAL

Cheques (US Dollars, on US banks, International MO or Sterling cheques) payable to ROAPE, 341 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2HP, England. Phone (0742) 752671. GIRO ACCOUNT No. 64 960 4008.

Name ..........................................................
Address ................................................................
...........................................................................

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

Because of the foreign exchange problems in many African countries we are trying to match up gift subscriptions with students and libraries. The appeals we get cannot be ignored nor can we send them without finding funds to keep us afloat. We could do this for you or you could indicate a preference. We will then send a subscription in your name. PLEASE BE Generous.

Name ..........................................................
Address ................................................................
...........................................................................