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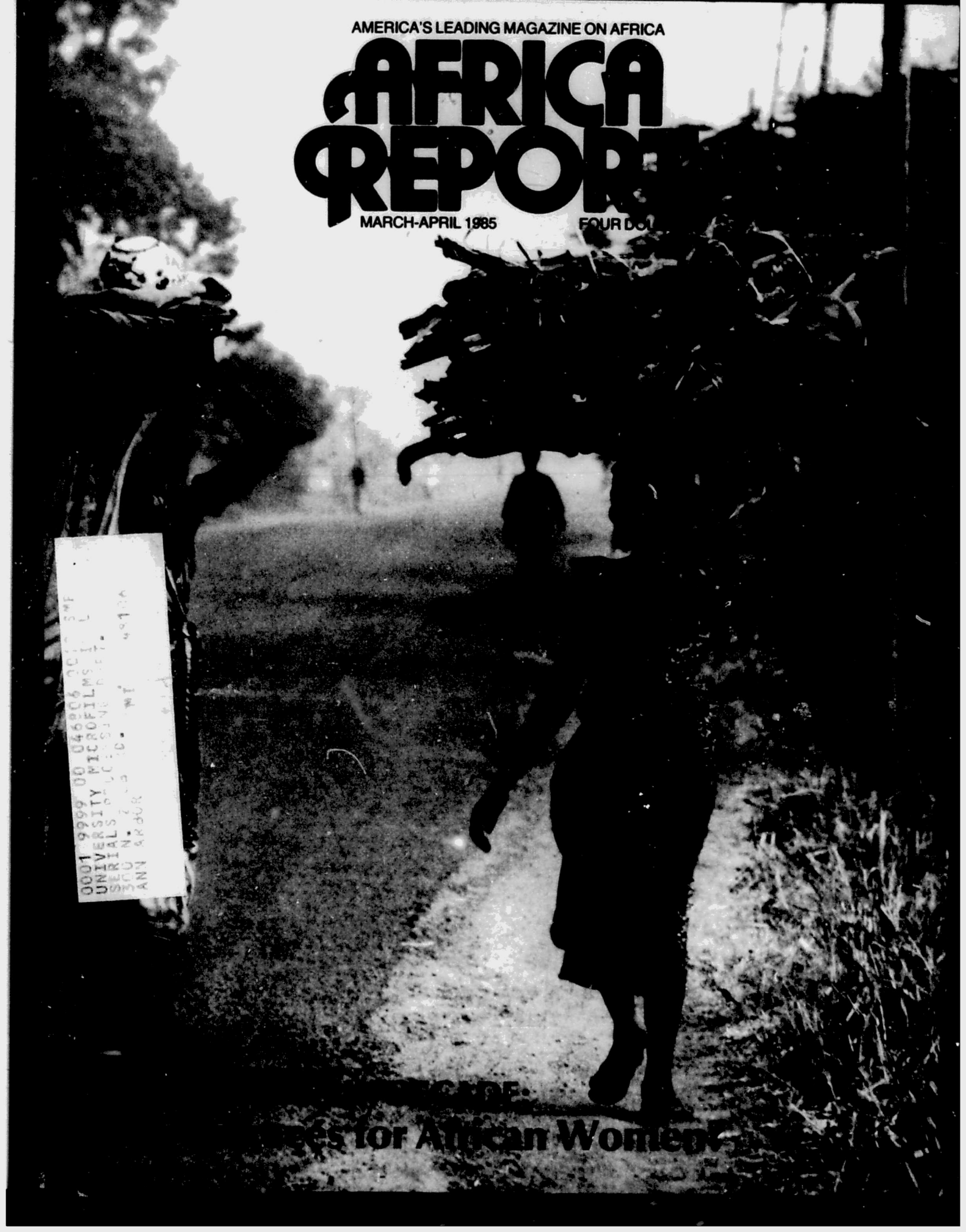
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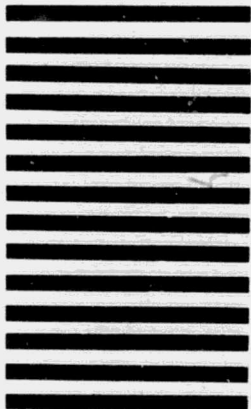
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# African Women at the End of the Decade

At the Kenyatta Conference Center in July, women in government will meet to review both the progress and the obstacles in achieving the themes of the UN Decade for Women. Women from Africa and the developing world will look to Nairobi to devise new strategies to better integrate them into their national development processes.

BY FILOMINA CHIOMA STEADY

**T**his year, the continent of Africa will resound with activities, deliberations, and recommendations promoting the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women—equality, development, and peace.

The World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from July 15-26, reflects the efforts of the international community over the last ten years to improve the status of women and to increase their participation, benefits, and decision-making opportunities in all spheres of social and economic development.

The Nairobi conference is the third in a series of United Nations conferences of the Women's Decade. The first, held in Mexico in 1975—the International Women's Year—produced the World Plan of Action, and the second, the Mid-Decade Conference held in Copenhagen in 1980, resulted in the Programme of Action.

The Nairobi conference, in addition to reviewing the achievements of the Decade, will identify the remaining obsta-

*Dr. Filomina Steady, a Sierra Leonean, is deputy director of the United Nations Branch for the Advancement of Women, now the Decade Conference Secretariat. She is solely responsible for the views expressed in this article.*



Margaret A. Novicki

**Organization of Angolan Women: "The Decade has inspired the founding of national machineries for the advancement of women"**

cles that prevent the realization of the Decade's goals. Guidelines for action and strategies based on the main conference document, "The Forward-Looking Strategies," will be formulated to implement the Decade's goals for the future.

According to Leticia R. Shahani, secretary-general of the conference, "This conference is the culminating interna-

tional event of the United Nations Decade for Women. Its significance is enormous—dealing as it does with half the world's population, some 2.4 billion human beings who, be they destitute women farmers struggling for a living to support their families, or women pioneering in the field of science, affect in the most fundamental way the rest of humanity."

One of the striking features of the Decade has been the gradual shift from emphasis on human rights, characteristic of the initial stages of the Decade, to social and economic development. Economic issues will assume even greater significance in the future in view of the challenges posed by the slow growth of the world economy and by the awareness and emergence of women as critical economic actors.

The importance of economic factors to the advancement of women was stressed in each of the intergovernmental regional preparatory meetings organized by the United Nations Economic Commissions in 1984. Economic issues also featured prominently in the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) regional meetings, as well as at the NGO Pre-Conference Consultations held in Vienna in October.

At the regional meeting for Africa held in Arusha in October and hosted by

the Tanzanian government, President Julius Nyerere underscored women's growing significance in their national economies in his opening remarks: "The problem of women's development in Africa is inextricably bound up with the problem of African poverty, and it cannot be solved outside the attack on poverty."

Food shortages in Africa, created by economic and environmental factors and worsened by the global recession, received central attention at the Arusha meeting. Although African women have traditionally played and continue to play critical roles in food production, the fact that they are primarily involved in subsistence agriculture was viewed as a significant aspect of the problem. This is made worse by the deterioration of rural economies in some regions as a result of widespread drought and desertification. All of these factors have resulted in a steady decrease in food production.

Many African women work as much as 15 hours a day in underdeveloped, rural villages with little or no resources, no formal education, and inadequate health care, lack of adequate sanitation, water supply, transportation and other facilities, as well as little or no awareness of their legal rights. Women are very active economically, particularly in the agricultural sector, in food processing, trade, and home industries. However, since their economic activities have been overwhelmingly in the informal sector, most of these contributions remain invisible, unremunerated, and undervalued.

It has been calculated that women produce 60 to 80 percent of Africa's agricultural output and 90 percent or more of the food crops. However, women have rarely benefited from modernization of agriculture through the introduction of tractors, agricultural inputs, plows, fertilizers, methods to improve yields, extension services, training, investments, research, and land reform. The trend has been that as land and crops assume monetary value, women become a more marginal part of the economy.

The challenge for the future is to arrest the negative trends of most current development strategies and programs, many of which do not give priority to women and tend to erode their resource

base, undermine their participation, and reinforce their inequality.

\* \* \*

At this point it would be useful to review the achievements of the Decade in global terms with special reference to African women. Responses received from 117 governments to a UN questionnaire reveal that some progress has been made in employment, health, and education, as well as in other areas such as agriculture, industry, trade, and ser-

vice in most parts of the world. However, much more remains to be done.

Many countries have established national machineries, formulated and implemented policies for the advancement of women, made legislative progress toward promoting greater equality between the sexes, and integrated women into development strategies and programs.

However, progress in the participation of women in decision-making in government, trade unions, and political parties remains slow. Despite reported



Nobu Arakawa

**"Be they destitute farmers or pioneers in the field of science, the world's 2.4 billion women affect in the most fundamental way the rest of humanity"**

legislative achievements, only a few countries have been able to eliminate most discriminatory laws and practices against women. Efforts to make changes have often been handicapped by contradictions and discrepancies between customary law and civil law. In addition, some countries have not yet passed legislative or constitutional guarantees ensuring equality of women and men and nondiscrimination on the basis of sex.

One of the major achievements of the Decade has been the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. To date, 65 countries, of which about 25 are African, have signed. A committee composed of experts from various parts of the world continues to monitor the Convention in conjunction with the Branch for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Secretariat unit which services the committee. The main problem, however, is implementation and enforce-

ment of the new laws, not only in the courts but in all spheres of life.

The establishment of national development plans and policies for the advancement of women has been a progressive development in many countries. In the developing world, equality of women is often viewed as linked to national and economic development. For many countries, the Decade has inspired the founding of institutions for the advancement of women. These are generally referred to as "national machineries" and usually operate in the form of women's bureaus.

In some countries, ministries to integrate women into national development have been instituted. A more common pattern, however, is for policies, plans, and programs concerning women to be integrated in whole or in part in various sectors of government such as social welfare, economic planning, and development.

Progress in the area of political partic-

ipation for women also remains slow. In almost all countries, women have the right to vote on paper, to be eligible for election or appointment to public office, and to exercise public functions on equal terms with men at the local, national, and international levels. In most countries, however, women participate only marginally at the highest levels of decision-making.

One noteworthy feature of the Decade has been the emphasis on promotion of technical cooperation activities, such as training, income generation, support to small-scale business development, and rural programs for women, within the overall development context.

African women have benefited from some of these programs, particularly those sponsored within the United Nations system by the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women, as well as those funded through bilateral aid. Most of these activities are, however, limited by the structure and management of aid,



Health care project, Zimbabwe: "The need to increase women's participation in health care planning is increasingly being recognized"



## CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS

### ■ Review and Appraisal

Review and appraisal of progress achieved and obstacles encountered in attaining the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women—equality, development, and peace—and the subthemes—employment, health, and education (at the national level).

### ■ Review of UN Activities

Review and appraisal of progress achieved and obstacles encountered by the United Nations system in support of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women—equality, development, and peace—based on information from specialized agencies and concerned United Nations bodies.

### ■ World Survey

World survey on the role of women in development.

### ■ Women under Apartheid

Report on the situation of women and children living under apartheid and other racist regimes.

### ■ Women Living in Occupied Territories

Report on the situation of women and children living in the Arab occupied territories and other occupied territories.

### ■ Forward-Looking Strategies

Forward-looking strategies of implementation for the advancement of women and concrete measures to overcome obstacles to the achievements of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women—equality, development, and peace and the subthemes—employment, health, and education, during the period up to the year 2000 at local, national, regional, and international levels (including a study on perspectives on the status of women to the year 2000).

which is often administratively top-heavy and tends to increase rather than decrease dependency among the people to whom it is directed.

Technical cooperation activities have also been hampered by perceptions and stereotypes which associate technology with men. In reality, women's roles in all spheres of technological activity are increasing rather than decreasing, requiring greater participation of women in the use and management of technology. In his speech to the Arusha preparatory meeting, President Nyerere expressed it aptly: "It is women who use the village water pump most of the time, but the person trained to maintain it is a man."

Progress in the field of education has been due to an increased awareness of women's intellectual capacity and the importance of their economic roles. It is becoming necessary to include women in equal numbers as men in all fields of educational and scientific training. Although the numbers of girls and boys enrolled in educational institutions in Af-

rica are increasing, the drop-out rate for girls is higher and there is a tendency toward greater male enrollment at the higher levels of education.

Positive changes have occurred in the approach to health care. Instead of viewing women primarily in terms of their biological function in reproduction and designing health care programs stressing only maternal and child care, women's health needs are increasingly viewed in terms of a general improvement of the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the community. The need to increase women's participation in decision-making for health care planning and delivery is increasingly being recognized.

Employment, health, and education—the subthemes of the Decade—are interrelated, and equal access to education and training will increase women's employment and vocational opportunities. Increasing employment and income generation for women could benefit their health, not only improving

their physical well-being through better nutrition, preventive action, and health care, but also reducing stress, anxiety, and despair.

Despite some progress for women during the Decade, several obstacles remain. Many are economic in nature and can be overcome by economic and social development policies and programs designed to benefit all people. Other obstacles can be traced to socio-cultural attitudes—the chronic and erroneous perceptions of women as inferior to men and relegated to a secondary status in society.

In many ways, these obstacles undermine the priority that should be given to women in development plans, policies, and programs. One major strategy implication for Nairobi will be an emphasis on the tremendous value of women's role in reproduction, child-rearing, and domestic labor, as well as in agricultural production and subsistence activities. Opportunities for education and training have to be expanded, and women must be more fully and equitably involved in decision-making at all levels of the power structure.

Perhaps one of the Decade's greatest achievements has been the creation of an awareness about the injustices and negative effects of discriminatory practices against women. The Decade has also helped to promote positive attitudes toward women in order to improve their status and position in society. It has also encouraged development that includes rather than excludes women, not only in terms of their contributions to development, but also in relation to the benefits that all of society derives from this process.

The Decade has also opened up new areas of research and stressed the need for the development of indicators and data which would strengthen efforts to promote the participation of women in development. One of the institutions set up by the UN to promote research and training for women is the International Institute of Research and Training for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), based in the Dominican Republic.

The 1975 Mexico conference defined the problem of women's inequality and low participation in the area of development and peace and produced a plan of

action. The Copenhagen conference engendered greater scrutiny of the development process itself. It emphasized areas which had been overlooked such as science and technology, called for more research activities, focused on the needs of rural women, and produced the Programme of Action.

The Nairobi conference is likely to give additional dimensions to the themes of the Decade—equality, development, and peace. The theme of equality will include not only strategies to pro-

mote equality between men and women, but also among women. The International Development Strategy of the UN Decade and the New International Economic Order will continue to influence development processes. The recommendations which are likely to be adopted at the Nairobi conference will not only accelerate the movement of women from the periphery of development into the mainstream, but will also increase their access to decision-making and power.

The issue of peace is closely linked to equality and development. Recommendations will likely stress the promotion of trust, understanding, and goodwill among all nations—necessary prerequisites for ending all forms of discrimination and oppression and for preventing war. This year, Nairobi will become the focal point of hope not only for women, particularly those who are disadvantaged, but also for the whole of humankind. □

## American Participation in the Official Conference

**T**he United States government views the 1985 United Nations Decade for Women Conference as a unique opportunity for women from the West to work with women from developing countries on issues of special concern to them. It also views the conference as an opportunity for American women to expand their efforts to assist women in development to implement their world action plans in practical ways. The reciprocal learning from these endeavors benefits all and represents one more way for governments to bring women closer to an envisioned goal of greater unity all over the world.

Preparations for the 1985 UN End of the Decade for Women Conference have stepped up. The U.S. government preparations are being handled by a secretariat located in the Department of State's Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Betty Dillon is coordinator of the secretariat.

The major functions of the secretariat include: outreach to the public and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through briefings, newsletters, and media events; preparation of policy and technical papers associated with the conference; and support for the U.S. delegation through briefings, training, and administrative assistance.

A governmental inter-agency task force, representing approximately 25 federal departments and agencies, works with the secretariat to assure that the concerns and opinions of American women are reflected in the policy papers and other documentation being prepared for the conference.

United States government agencies and NGOs have engaged in a concerted effort of assuring a successful conference by gaining global support for focusing on issues that unite rather than divide women, for encouraging

member states to preclude the exploitation of the conference for propaganda or other purposes, and for assuring that extraneous political matters that detract from accomplishing the goals of the conference are not introduced.

The final United Nations planning session for the World Conference will take place at the preparatory committee meeting in March in Vienna. The 32 members of the UN Commission on the Status of Women comprise the preparatory committee. The major activities of the meeting will be to establish conference rules and procedures and to review and approve conference documentation.

During the last year, the United States has initiated some significant new resolutions dealing with such issues of concern as family violence, women in development, and the plight of women refugees. In addition, we have supported the introduction of other resolutions on, among others, the problems faced by older women, the promotion of opportunities for young women, and equal employment opportunities for women in the United Nations system.

The U.S. continues its dialogue with like-minded member states to reinforce and expand the commitment to keep to the conference agenda and to follow consensus voting on UN action items. It is also participating in and monitoring all of the activities leading up to the conference to assure that the focus of the conference is on issues germane to women world-wide. □

—Nancy Reynolds

U.S. Representative to the  
UN Commission on the Status of Women

# The Decade NGO Forum

While the official Decade conference deliberations are going on, thousands of women representing non-governmental organizations from around the world will also be meeting to strengthen cooperation at the grassroots level in order to sustain the Decade's momentum into the future.

BY NITA BARROW

**T**he United Nations Decade for Women is both a response and a stimulus to women's quest for full participation in the institutions governing their lives. Yet a random sampling of current publications suggests that untold thousands of books and periodicals devoted to the Decade themes—equality, development, and peace—have appeared in the past 10 years without a single reference to the Decade or even to society's stake in a more effective contribution by the female half of the population in furthering these goals.

Despite its limited visibility, the Decade has mobilized its own constituency in 150 countries. Small bureaus have been established in governments, in the United Nations, and in most of its affiliated agencies. Millions of members of organizations all over the world are part of a movement some observers have claimed is the most important historical development of the 20th century.

At the United Nations International Women's Year Conference, held in Mexico in 1975, the issues of concern to women were expressed through the main themes of equality, development, and peace, though a number of other

crucial issues emerged. The official conference adopted the Declaration of Mexico, which gave a mandate to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to play their part in helping women to procure their rights. More than 6,000 women representing non-governmental organizations or in their individual capacities participated in the Tribune, a body that met separately from the gathering of government representatives.

For many women, it was their first time in a gathering of this nature, providing them with opportunities to share knowledge across cultures and national boundaries on an unprecedented scale. The daily paper published by the Tribune provided further information on events, decisions, and discussions. When participants returned to their home countries, they continued discussing the issues raised at the conference, determined not to allow the world to remain oblivious to what happened in Mexico.

The mandate given to NGOs by the conference was: "There should be mutual cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations, women's voluntary agencies, youth groups, employers and workers' unions, religious groups, the mass communications media, political parties, and the like in implementing the program of action for the second half of the Decade."

An outpouring of research, analysis, and new publications to disseminate the conference findings and other information relevant to the Decade followed. International and regional centers for training and research and information clearinghouses have sprung up all over the world, bringing about gradual change in funding patterns designed to draw women into the mainstream of national life.

Then in 1980, the United Nations Mid-Decade Conference was convened in Copenhagen. Its objective was to review the progress made since the Mexico meeting and determine a program of action for the second half of the Decade. The main Decade themes—equality, development, and peace—were expanded to include sub-themes of equal importance to women—employment, health, and education. Priorities were developed for women of "developing areas" in developed countries, as well as for women of developing countries. The NGO meeting, Forum '80, ran concurrently, providing the opportunity for some 8,000 women to share their views and experiences and discuss not only past achievements, but the obstacles to further progress.

The road to Nairobi had begun. A meeting to mark the end of the Decade was envisioned, although the details were determined much later. The UN World Conference to Review and Ap-

*Nita Barrow, a Barbadian, is convenor of the NGO Forum of the UN Decade for Women Conference. She is a professional health consultant.*

praise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, the third of the Decade series, will assess progress, identify obstacles, and devise a strategy for the future.

At Nairobi's Kenyatta Conference Center, delegates in plenary and in two committees will confront volumes of documents on the implementation of the Decade program in the areas of its themes and sub-themes. These will include a summary of governmental and NGO responses to a detailed questionnaire, supplemented by testimony from experts and research groups. Delegates will also find reports from the United Nations agencies on their implementation of the Decade program.

Forum '85, the NGO meeting, will take place at the same time at the University of Nairobi, with several thousand participants discussing topics similar to those of the World Conference. The forum has been arranged by a planning committee of 60 international NGOs under the sponsorship of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council and a number of Kenyan women's groups who are also represented on the planning committee.

A core program of presentations and discussion sessions will be interpreted in English, French, Spanish, and Swahili. In addition, several hundred panels, workshops, group discussions, exhibits, performances, demonstrations in such fields as appropriate technology, and a handicrafts fair will facilitate the exchange of views that is the primary objective of Forum '85. The planning committee will also publish a daily newspaper covering both the conference and the forum.

Two important means of obtaining women's views were used during preparations for Nairobi. First, NGO regional meetings were held in conjunction with the official UN regional meetings. Second, the NGO Secretariat circulated a five-page survey whose findings were tabulated by a group of women researchers who volunteered their time. Responses to the survey came from Europe, Canada, Australia, the U.S., India, Japan, southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, North Africa, and the Middle East. A report has been compiled from which

general observations will be taken. The report provided some very useful information for the regional meetings in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, as well as for the Pre-Conference Consultation in Vienna.

The NGO report's analysis of women's achievements over the Decade tallies in some instances with that of governments in the official UN appraisal. In other areas, there was a divergence of opinion. Attitudinal change was one area of agreement—women saw progress in their societies in terms of "increased awareness of women's needs, an increased recognition of women's contributions to society, and a change toward a more positive view of women in general."

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**"The search for solidarity has enabled women for the first time to cross social and economic barriers to form working coalitions."**

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Each regional meeting presented a different view of women from non-governmental organizations. The value of the meetings was the diversity of the women who attended from local and national organizations—women who knew what was taking place in their countries and their communities and who had actually contributed to progress. This was certainly true of the African regional meeting held in Arusha, Tanzania, in October 1984, attended by members of 25 non-governmental organizations from 17 African countries.

The themes identified for discussion were organized into the following groups:

- Equality and peace;
- Development—employment and education;
- Development—health, population, water, food, and nutrition;
- Development—science, technology, environment, and habitat;
- Women with special needs—the elderly, those living under apartheid, refugees, those in occupied territories, migrants, nomads, and abused women.

The groups summarized their findings on these issues into the following

categories: achievements, obstacles, and strategies for the future. The achievements highlighted a wide range of national and regional gains made during the Decade, realistically set against a background of "overall worsening economic and political conditions in Africa which have adversely affected the conditions of women."

One of the group's first affirmations was that "a new awareness and consciousness of self has developed among African women. . . This has helped women to develop a new sense of confidence in their potential which has led to increased activity and participation in the development spheres." Repeatedly, during the discussions, they noted the growing recognition given to women and their needs: "Progress has been achieved, not exclusively because of government action, nor exclusively because of the determination of NGOs but because they have managed to use each others' special qualities—structures, personnel, conviction, and dedication to an objective, and the ability to mobilize women power."

They were also realistic about the obstacles to the realization of the themes: "Recognizing that the overriding obstacle to women's progress within the decade lay first in the dual factors of the increasing poverty throughout the African continent and to its unhealthy relation to the inequities of the current world economic order, we specify various impediments that affect women in the women's Decade areas of equality, development, and peace."

African women have shown great strength and purpose in using the opportunities which have presented themselves during this period. The meetings themselves have been showcases of interaction by persons from vastly different circumstances, some of whom are learning for the first time about countries from which others come. The new awareness that women everywhere share the same basic inequities has prompted a flood of inquiry into diverse cultures and the identification of common elements in a wide range of lifestyles. This search for solidarity, though often fraught with initial hostility and challenged values, has enabled women in the same country or community for the first time to cross social and

economic barriers to form working coalitions.

The dialogue and the resulting action is not limited to "women's issues." The recorded proceedings of countless Decade-related meetings prove otherwise. Thousands of study programs and seminars in the industrialized countries have brought women from developing countries to teach about their situation. Inevitably, the meetings turn to problems of development, trade imbalances, commercial exploitation, and the need for a new economic order. And thousands of northern women have journeyed to Africa and other regions of the south to learn firsthand what life is like for women there. They now understand why a group of African women's organizations readily chose access to clean water as their priority for a cooperative Decade project.

What have women achieved? Intercultural, international networks of women and interested men have transformed regional concerns into global issues. For the South Pacific, it was a determination to rid the region of nuclear testing. In some developing countries, it was opposition to methods used in marketing commercial infant formula. The ensuing global campaign brought one giant transnational corporation to its knees and reformed the practices of others.

Women's lack of access to credit for agriculture and small-scale industries in some countries led a hard-working, persistent north-south group comprised of representatives of trade unions, businesses, governments, and donor agencies to establish Women's World Banking. Its assets are relatively small, but its guaranteed loan program for women in small business is well underway. Its workshops of women leaders in banking and finance have helped launch Women's World Banking affiliates in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Mali, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The center of the entire network is the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women. Although the Fund is a creature of the United Nations, it depends on voluntary contributions from governments and private sources and has generated a network of support committees in several countries. These, as well as

international non-governmental organizations which work with the Fund at the project level, are disseminating information about the Fund's projects.

In Guinea, the Fund has helped women in the fishing industry to improve their production with new smoking ovens. In Swaziland, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia, Lesotho, Senegal, and Ivory Coast, a regional task force is working on food technology and textiles. In Ghana, Gambia, and Kenya, training is being conducted in women-owned businesses and wood-fuel projects. Water delivery projects under the Fund's auspices are being implemented

in Guinea, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau.

Another focus of Decade activity is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a document finally adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and now ratified by over 50 nations. Women continue to work for ratification by more governments as they monitor implementation of the Convention's provisions in their own countries. The International Women's Tribune Center in New York has published a 200-page workbook to help women monitor this and other international con-



Luanda, Angola: "Women's lack of access to credit led a north-south group of representatives of trade unions, businesses, government, and donors to establish Women's World Banking"

Margaret A. Novicki

ventions pertaining to women's legal status.

What of the future? There is still a large section of women whose role in the achievements of the Decade cannot really be assessed. They are the marginalized women who for a variety of reasons will never see a survey, or participate in a meeting, or even hear about the Decade for Women. Their struggle is for the barest existence. Many of them are worse off than a decade ago. As women meet for the third time in an international setting, it is important that

the needs of those not there to express themselves become part of the strategies for the future.

President Nyerere, in the address to the Arusha regional meeting for the World Conference on the Decade for Women, stated: "Women's development is thus not an easy or simple process. It is many-sided. It involves economic development of the nation. . . in particular, it means building new social attitudes in which all people are regarded as truly of equal social worth. . . The struggle for women's development

has to be conducted by women, not in opposition to men, but as part of the social development of the whole people."

There will be cause for celebration in Nairobi. The fact that women's concerns and needs have come to the forefront is reason enough for that. But more needs to be done. The dream for the next 15 years is that women working constructively, together with men, can overcome divisions and constraints to attain the goals of equality, development, and peace. □

## American Women and the Decade NGO Forum

**N**airobi, Kenya will be the return address on thousands of postcards sent home by American women this July. Applications for visas, deposits on hotel rooms, and registration fees are now going in the mail as American women and their sisters around the world prepare for the third United Nations Decade for Women conference. Most of the women will participate in the NGO Forum—so titled because the women will be representing non-governmental organizations. About 30 or 40 American women, selected by the White House and the State Department and speaking for the government, will form the U.S. delegation to the official UN conference.

Only a few of the women at Nairobi will have participated in the two previous UN world conferences—in Mexico City in 1975 during the International Women's Year and in Copenhagen in 1980 at the Mid-Decade Conference. For most, this will be their first experience on the African continent, in the developing world, and at an international meeting. The subject matter of the discussions at Nairobi will be familiar, but the milieu and the diversity of women and their experiences and background may produce some culture shock for American participants.

The preparations underway in the U.S. are far more extensive than those for the previous two conferences. Hundreds of American women's groups are briefing their members about plans for Nairobi; some are beginning to use the UN agenda for the conference within their own organizations. Some groups will send representatives; others will participate at home. Since the funds to attend

the world conference have to be raised individually, the idea of participating at home is gaining momentum. Both the UN agenda and increased media interest in this conference make local involvement possible.

The agenda calls for looking back over the decade to assess the progress that has been made in advancing the status of women, then examining current and future trends that will have an impact on women. Based on this analysis, and taking into account the obstacles to progress, the agenda then calls for the development of forward-looking strategies to achieve equal partnership between women and men by the year 2000. This can be undertaken simultaneously by groups at home and by the meetings in Nairobi. Satellite communications technology will allow many women to view what happens in Nairobi from their own living rooms or from community centers. Those groups which have members attending the sessions in Nairobi are already planning "report back" sessions.

The Women, Public Policy, and Development project at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, has published two documents now being used by many groups and individuals. These are "How to Participate in the World Women's Conference Without Leaving Home" and "Looking to the Future," containing condensed versions of the World Plan of Action adopted at Mexico City, the Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, signed at Copenhagen

and ratified by over 50 countries. Other groups, such as the International Women's Tribune Center and the African-American Institute in New York and the Coalition on Women in Development in Washington, have prepared informational kits, held conferences, or provided background papers for the conferences.

In October, the American Association of University Women hosted a national conference in New York attended by over 900 women interested in the Nairobi meetings. Nancy Reynolds, U.S. delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women; Margaret Papandreou, former U.S. activist married to the current Greek prime minister; and Dame Nita Barrow of Barbados, convenor of the international NGO Planning Committee for Nairobi, briefed the group. Panels and workshops on education, employment, and health—the sub-themes of the Decade—were held alongside others on equality, development, and peace—the major themes of the Decade and its conferences.

At least four other major preparatory meetings have been organized by American women during the last year. The African-American Institute put together an international meeting at Wingspread, the conference center of the Johnson Foundation near Racine, Wisconsin. Among the Decade Conference plans developed at that meeting were a marketplace for African women's crafts and sessions on women in economic development. Later, again at Wingspread, another international meeting of women in development experts agreed that women's organizations were the key to progress and had been overlooked by many development assistance agencies.

This group recommended STOP VIPS—ending violence, ignorance, poverty, and the subordination of women—as a slogan and a strategy. Violence was identified as the root cause of domestic difficulties, child abuse, and the priority many countries give to military expenditures over social welfare. Ignorance included both illiteracy—an acute problem in the developing world especially for women and girls—and lack of access to information, especially about new and appropriate technologies. Poverty is a worldwide problem for women. The increasing feminization of poverty and the growth of female-headed households is a universal phenomenon, leading to the impoverishment of children. And the subordination of women must be overcome if women are to be equal partners with men.

The publication of *Sisterhood Is Global*, a compendium of essays by world feminists which includes data on women in 68 countries, was heralded with another international conference in the U.S. This book is now used in countless college courses and by informal groups across the country who are preparing for Nairobi.

This year, Ruth Sivard, who publishes an annual world military and social expenditures report for World Priorities, a Washington-based research group, is also putting out "Women . . . A World Survey," a booklet with graphs and

charts on the situation of women in the world community. This statistical record focuses on the changes that have occurred since World War II and will be an invaluable resource for all women involved with the Nairobi conference. The publication, jointly funded by Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations, will be available at \$5.00 per copy from a variety of distribution centers around the country and sold by the Kenya NGO Planning Committee in Nairobi.

Strengthening women's organizations and using their power to change public policy for and about women was the subject of the fourth major preparatory conference organized by American women. Hosted by the Rockefeller Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, 23 women, including five from the U.S., proposed a set of strategies for women's groups which is now being circulated worldwide. This group acknowledged the contribution of the established women's organizations, especially in formulating the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination and in ensuring the creation of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Decade. They also noted the expansion in the numbers of new national and grassroots women's organizations during the Decade.

While these major conferences are being replicated by smaller, more informal meetings all over the country, other American women are working with their global sisters to organize panels and workshops at the Nairobi NGO Forum. Jane Jaquette of Occidental College is working with South American, European, and Asian women to put together sessions on women in politics. The Overseas Education Fund, the Columbia Law and Development Program, and the Humphrey Institute are collaborating with others to produce a series on women and the law. The Association for Women in Development is working with overseas groups and will hold a conference in April in Washington on "Women Creating Wealth: Transforming Economic Development."

There is a growing acknowledgment that American women share common concerns with all women despite political differences. There is also a growing commitment to make Nairobi not an end of the Decade conference, but a renewal of the momentum described in the 1975 World Plan of Action: "History has attested to the active role which women played, together with men, in accelerating the material and spiritual progress of peoples. . . in our times, women's roles will increasingly emerge as a powerful revolutionary social force." Women do intend to be equal partners, not subordinates. The idea is revolutionary; the process is evolutionary. Nairobi will be a testament to that fact. □

—Arvonne S. Fraser

Senior Fellow  
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs

# G.K.T. Chiepe

## Minister of Foreign Affairs, Botswana

Botswana's first woman university graduate and first female cabinet minister discusses the advances of women over the UN Decade and the significance of women's contributions to the economic development of her country.

INTERVIEWED BY MARGARET A. NOVICKI

**Africa Report:** Looking back on the past ten years, what advances have African women made in your view and what have been the main barriers to advancement? Has the status of women in Africa improved over the course of the UN Decade for Women?

**Chiepe:** I think the position of women in Africa has improved. Of course, African women are advancing at different paces and the level of improvement differs from country to country. But in almost all countries, there has been some improvement. Some countries have introduced new legislation to remove some of the legal disadvantages which women experience and some are in the process of amending legislation to remove sections discriminatory against women, particularly married women. I think mainly attitudes have stood in the way of further advances. But whereas you can change legislation and influence culture by legal instruments, attitudes, including women's attitudes of submission and helplessness, cannot be changed over night and have to be worked on.

**Africa Report:** How would you characterize the position of women in Botswana and their role in the country's economic development?

**Chiepe:** In Botswana, there has been a definite improvement over the years in the status of women. To start with, women in Botswana have achieved a certain amount of confidence. I think part of the problem has been women's underestimation of their own value and their own ability. While there hasn't really been legislation which discriminates against women, some changes have been brought out by legislation. For in-

stance, until about ten years ago, women were automatically married "in community of property," unless the couple decided otherwise. But this militated against women having the right to own property in their own right. But now couples are married automatically out of community of property.

Women have become more active in development projects, particularly in the rural areas where agriculture and small-scale industry are primarily women's responsibilities. The government of Botswana has programs and projects to advance the lot of women. For instance, under the financial assistance policy, the government provides funds to assist in small-scale industry and to promote exports of manufactured goods, thereby earning foreign exchange. In terms of funding, the government discriminates in favor of rural development where there is competition between rural and urban applications and in favor of women where men and women compete, all things being equal. In rural development, there is a definite and specific discrimination in favor of women, which encourages them a great deal.

**Africa Report:** Are women in Botswana affected by male labor migration to South Africa as is the case in other southern African countries?

**Chiepe:** Yes, they are. As the men go to the mines in South Africa to work, the women in Botswana have got to be in charge of everything. In some ways, this has made the women more responsible for everything that happens at home while their men are away. But now, fewer and fewer men are going to South Africa because South Africa is reducing labor intake from outside its borders. This is a disadvantage for men and their families who depend almost entirely on the South



African mines for wages. But if the men are going to be kept at home, what we need are projects and programs which will create employment for them.

**Africa Report:** So it is really the women who are the backbone of economic development in Botswana.

**Chiepe:** This is correct. Agriculture is the mainstay of Botswana's economy and most of it is handled by women. Women are also becoming active in small-scale industry and they are the chief actors in rural development on a self-help basis.

However, for example, when agriculture goes beyond the subsistence level, the women often think the men must come in and take over. When mechanization—tractors and other heavy implements—is introduced, the men get involved. But the men themselves are beginning to appreciate that there has to be shared responsibility in practically everything.

**Africa Report:** Does the government have programs to provide women with extension services and training so that they can modernize their role in agricultural production?

**Chiepe:** Yes, the government has such programs. It has sponsored seminars for women in agriculture. In fact, some of the master farmers in Botswana are women.

**Africa Report:** What national machineries for women's advancement exist in Botswana?

**Chiepe:** We have two main women's organizations, the Botswana Council of Women and the YWCA. We also have professional women's associations, and then there are smaller groups. A number of these women's organizations, including the Girl Guides, have joined together to form the Association of Botswana Women's Organizations. The Ministry of Home Affairs also has a unit which specializes in women's affairs and in trying to help, encourage, and assist women in running seminars. Their projects get some financial assistance from the government.

**Africa Report:** As you are one of only two women foreign ministers in the entire African continent, could you highlight your career development, including any obstacles you encountered as a woman?

**Chiepe:** I probably was not observant enough or refused to accept that whatever problems I encountered were the result of my being a woman. First, I was fortunate to have been brought up in a village where there were schools. I did very well in primary school and got a merit bursary to attend high school. Then I got another scholarship to do my degree work, and then post-graduate education. I then qualified as a teacher.

I was the first woman university graduate in Botswana, and therefore when I got my teaching job, I was heads and shoulders above most of those I worked with, so they accepted my position and ability and didn't challenge that. And then I pursued teacher training and became an education officer in school inspections, where all the teachers were people with a lower education than myself and who looked up to me for guidance and assistance. I went through different stages of being inspector, administrator, and ultimately became the director of the entire national educational system.

Then I was transferred from education to the diplomatic service which I thoroughly enjoyed. I spent five years in London as high commissioner and ambassador to most of Western Europe, where I was involved in negotiations for the first

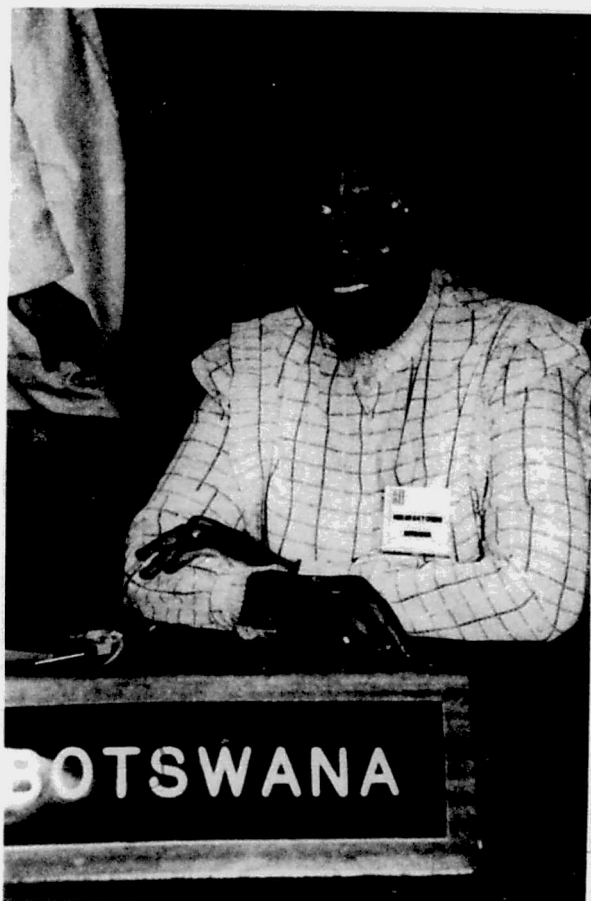
Lomé Convention between the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries and the European Economic Community. Then I left the civil service and joined politics. I became the first woman cabinet minister, for two years as minister of commerce, then seven and a half years as minister of mineral resources and water affairs before becoming foreign minister.

**Africa Report:** Your career record must be rather unique vis-à-vis other women in government service.

**Chiepe:** Yes, I think so. Perhaps I was luckier than most women. But more women are beginning to come up now.

**Africa Report:** What in your view is the proper approach to take toward advancing the status of women in Africa? Should special women's bureaus, programs, and projects be set up, or should women's issues be seen more in the context of Africa's overall economic development?

**Chiepe:** I think women's programs are important and should be encouraged. But care should be taken not to focus so much attention on them that the women will be lost sight of and excluded from other common programs of general development. They should have as much assistance as men. But if there is an over-concentration on projects specifically for women, they may be left out of other very important national issues and that would be a pity.



**Dr. G.K.T. Chiepe:** "Whereas you can change legislation and influence culture by legal instruments, attitudes cannot be changed overnight"

Margaret A. Novicki

**Africa Report:** What advice would you give to your government to improve the position of women in Botswana? Are there specific areas that you feel need special attention?

**Chiepe:** I do not like the sort of attitude some people have that we must have a woman for such-and-such a job, that there are so many men, we must have a woman just for the sake of having one. I think care should be taken to identify women with talent. For a woman to make something of herself, she has to be that much better than a man in similar circumstances. Governments should make special efforts to try and identify women with talent and use them without forcing them into situations just because they want a woman.

**Africa Report:** As the UN End of the Decade for Women

conference is going to be held in Nairobi, it seems that more attention will probably be focused on women in developing countries. What issues related to African women would you like to see the conference address?

**Chiepe:** I think the meeting should address ways of encouraging women to develop self-confidence and the ability to fight their way through. I wouldn't encourage too much talk about "women's lib." And women shouldn't think that because they are women, they should have everything presented to them on a platter. They must know that things have to be fought for and I think those who show ability must be encouraged. While women's programs should be looked at and assisted, they must be integrated with issues of Africa's overall economic development. □



"For a woman to make something of herself, she has to be that much better than a man in similar circumstances"

# Equal Partners in Africa's Development

Women in Africa participate at all levels of economic activity—from subsistence farming to government service—but psychological, social, and material barriers limit their capacity to play a more instrumental role in the development of modern Africa.

BY ROSE FRANCINE ROGOMBE

**I**n Africa, women represent 51 percent of the active population and can be found in all different professions and branches of activity. Although their contributions may not be officially recognized, it is undeniable that their role is critical to the economic development of their respective countries.

## Women in the Economy

Between 60 and 80 percent of all agricultural labor in Africa is undertaken by women, who are found all along the food chain. The African woman sows, reaps, transports, processes, and sells the food. At least 50 percent of food production is provided by women. Women start working from childhood and contribute until the day when they are too tired to do so. In the rural areas, women work even when they are pregnant, up until the time of birth, because it is they who must satisfy the basic needs of their families.

Women are the pillars of Africa's economic development. In the rural areas, there is no possibility for any kind of development if women do not participate fully for the simple reason that they are the ones who produce the food

*Rose Francine Rogombe is Secretary of State for Women's Advancement in Gabon.*

crops. They also play a very important role in the production of cash crops in some countries. In all the villages, in addition to the fact that they cultivate the land, African women also participate in community life. They are responsible for domestic work—care of the house and the family—as well as production of domestic articles—mats, baskets, cooking utensils—and the preparation of beverages which are secondary sources of revenue in rural areas.

In the pastoral areas of the Sahel, women have their own herds of cattle which must be managed and cared for, and they must also process and sell the dairy goods. In these societies, farming was traditionally entrusted to men, but these roles have been disrupted in most of the Sahelian zone due to the drought and the resulting male migration. This has added to women's labor burden.

Although fishing has never been considered an important activity for women, women do play substantial roles in some fishing communities in the processing, preservation, and sale of the fish. In the height of the fishing season, women sometimes work up to 16 hours a day.

Women are also well-represented in the production and trading of traditional goods—baskets, weaving and dyeing, pottery—as well as in the marketing of modern goods—shoes, candy, per-

fumes, canned goods, cooked foods, etc. It is imperative therefore that African countries correctly evaluate women's efforts in the sphere of small-scale trading in order to better grasp the impact of this sector on economic development.

Women are poorly represented in the service sector, particularly in the public sector, apart from health and education where specialized personnel represent more than half the labor force. While more and more women have access to higher positions in the upper echelons of administration and often make valuable contributions to the conception and planning of projects, they remain a minority because of limited access to training. Participation of women in the private sector is practically nonexistent and certain businesses visibly discriminate against women despite the existing legislation. Women who work in private enterprises are mainly secretaries, saleswomen, or office workers.

Even though they are not often considered as full-time workers, it should be mentioned here that domestic workers make important contributions to economic development insofar as their work frees qualified women from their own domestic responsibilities.

In many countries, especially in Anglophone Africa, women have played and continue to play a very important

role in the development and growth of small and medium-sized cooperative enterprises which represent an important step in the industrialization process. In some cases, it is thanks to these women that their countries are represented on regional or world markets.

Industrialization has long been considered a criteria for development; therefore women's organizations must concentrate their efforts in this area. Today, the role of women in the industrial sector and the economic value of their contributions to industrial development are very limited. The reasons for this are primarily that the industries in African countries are characterized by poor technology, low productivity, and a high degree of labor-intensivity.

These industries—in particular the textile, confectionary, and food processing industries—have a common denominator: low wages and poor working conditions. These three industrial sectors were the first to have been created in Africa, and although many women are employed in them, it is at the lowest possible levels. Irrespective of the sector and the type of industry, women's participation is at the lowest level of professional competence. Indeed, very few African women possess even the minimum technical knowledge, which makes their involvement in the application of

the most advanced technology virtually impossible.

In some countries, African women are beginning to make their presences felt in industry as independent entrepreneurs, leading and directing manufacturing and service activities. In this regard, one can cite the example of Ghana, but these are isolated cases, not significant enough to create the environment capable of encouraging other women or of creating new legislation which would help them.

Women can play a meaningful role in industry if the many psychological, economic, and material barriers disappear or are blunted. In the immediate future, employing more women and improving their position in industry can without a doubt play an important part in the process of industrialization in a number of our countries. It is therefore urgent to take effective measures which will enable women to strengthen their participation in the various industrial sectors that will promote the economic development of our countries.

### Women in Science and Technology

For African countries, science and technology constitute the final hurdle to overcome in order to control their own development. Biology, microelec-

tronics, and new forms of energy are the keys in this area.

It is primarily the women who are responsible for the health of the community. At a point in time when society is trying to expand its scientific knowledge, it is natural that women should be in the forefront of research in modern curative sciences. The lack of women in biological research is therefore deplorable. Women seem to be relegated more to the level of "observers," irrespective of their abilities.

The percentage of women doctors, dentists, and pharmacists is increasing slowly and regularly, but the level of female participation in these professions is directly a result of government policies. In Gabon, for example, President Omar Bongo supports giving women "all the means to acquire skills, to educate their children, to improve their households" as well as "a fair place in the working world and in political life."

In the field of microelectronics, women have been assured of openings as computer operators and programmers, earning relatively substantial salaries. But at higher levels, prospects for women are dim. In addition, the service and non-skilled sectors in which African women are the majority will suffer most by the changes brought about by information technology, while their positions in the higher echelons will continue to be insignificant.

There is little incentive for women to become involved in advanced technology because of the absence of research facilities in our countries. Whereas there are a few individuals who have reached a sufficiently high level of training—as is the case in Gabon—these women are confined to remaining technicians, making it impossible for them to contribute to the development and management of these new forms of technology.

### Women in Social and Cultural Development

It is recognized by everyone that the family is the basic cell of all society and that the woman is the driving force, as it is she who runs the household. The African woman plays an important role in all human endeavors. She participates fully in the maintenance, growth, improvement, and harmony of human life.



Market woman in Togo: "It is imperative that African countries correctly evaluate women's efforts in the sphere of small-scale trading"

She should therefore be allowed to develop and contribute effectively to the economic development and social progress of the nation.

In our traditional societies, women are the guardians of our culture. It is they who perpetuate and transmit by education and by example that which has been passed on to them. Faced with the inevitable clash of two cultures—African and Western—African societies are being impregnated more and more with values centered on consumption. But the contact between these two types of societies should not lead only to social changes, but to development as well.

As the woman is at the center of the education of the family and society, she must be careful that in passing on external cultural models, our customs and traditions which form the intrinsic value of our cultural identity will not be destroyed. Women must therefore jealously preserve our cultural values, yet be able to synthesize the traditional with the new in order to enhance the culture as a whole.

### Women in Public Life

The need for women to participate more actively in the process of economic and political development in Africa is recognized by everyone. International development strategies have emphasized measures to increase women's full and effective participation in all aspects of development. The Mexico Declaration on the equality of women and the Lagos Plan of Action encompass similar fundamental objectives. They stress the urgent need to establish new and equitable socio-economic relations between the industrial and developing countries and between men and women.

Nevertheless, the psychological barriers—the ideas and social traditions related to women throughout the world and more particularly in Africa—limit their possibilities to participate in the public life of their countries. Women, long considered solely as workhorses and child-bearers and of inferior status to men, did not feel the need to get involved in public life. Therefore, African women's participation in political activities has always been insignificant.

Whereas traditionally she had certain



Nobu Arakawa

**"Faced with the inevitable clash of two cultures, African societies are being impregnated more and more with values centered around consumption"**

roles to play on the political level, the exercise of her political rights was based on elements different from those in European society, such as family status, maturity, and coming of age. Her role was that of adviser, for she was the primary confidante of her husband and could influence the decisions of her spouse.

After African countries gained independence, some efforts were made to involve women in certain political and administrative responsibilities. After the declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975, followed by the UN Decade for Women which is to end this year, these efforts were strengthened by the setting up of political and administrative structures to foster the development of women's political consciousness and by their determination to work alongside men within the framework of their respective roles for harmonious and self-reliant development.

The lack of women's participation in political life is an integral part of the more general problem of the advancement of women, as those who participate in the process of decision-making are the first to benefit from the decisions adopted. The role of the African woman who occupies high political office and participates in decision-making would thus involve being conscious of

the real needs of women in order to redirect policies in their favor and thus to participate in the implementation of these decisions. She should serve as the link between these political powers and the mass of women.

In a number of countries, women do participate in political life. But their participation cannot simply be evaluated on the basis of the number of women represented in a particular political structure, or those representing their governments in international fora. While women are represented at high levels, their powers are so restricted that the value of their contribution is not recognized.

### Obstacles to the Full Participation of Women in Development

The important role of women is often rendered invisible by psychological obstacles, as well as those of a technical and material nature. Attitudes and socio-cultural prejudices are essentially transmitted through education and culture—the reproduction of a system of values based on outmoded sociological and historical data which justifies the sexual division of roles at every level of life. This ideology causes individuals to conform to sexual stereotypes.

The African woman remains the prin-

cial victim of these stereotypes because she is the guardian of the social values. She therefore must be educated, but traditional education in the rural areas often collides with modern education in the city, causing contradictions and disequilibria.

In traditional societies, the African woman's role is defined as wife and mother. As a mother she is not considered as an inferior; she is worshipped in all African cultures. Although in some societies, women play important religious roles and some are consulted for all important decisions, as a general rule they are mainly relegated to domestic and agricultural chores and remain subject to the authority of the father, and then of the husband.

Not only did this situation not improve with colonization, but it was further complicated by the development of the cash economy and the resulting disintegration of the family unit. Women today find themselves in a difficult situation, as few of them have adequate education or professional training. They live in a dislocated world where in addition to the prejudices of the past are added those of colonization and the problems of underdevelopment.

During the colonial period, men had more access to education than women and began to work outside of the home, whereas the majority of women remained illiterate, performing only the domestic and agricultural chores for which they had been trained. This explains the timidity and indecisiveness of some African women in certain areas of development. As they lack ambition and motivation to pursue their studies, they are poorly educated and are unable to help their children to learn. They rarely understand the dangers of poor hygiene and poor nutrition. They are likely to be constantly pregnant, as child-bearing is held in high esteem and is a process over which they have little control.

With reference to these different obstacles mentioned above, one must add that women lack information. The paucity of programs and publications geared toward African women is deplorable. And it is practically always men who write about women and speak on their behalf. The African women's press that does exist contributes to keeping women in their domestic ghetto by not

discussing anything other than cooking, domestic work, and beauty. A look at our women's magazines shows that they are almost always concerned with advice for dieting, make-up, etc.—always formulas to please and create an image that is agreeable to men.

The same problem is found in cinema, television, and advertising. Considering the power of these images on the subconscious mind, there is a need to reform the mass media. Its constant and



**Women pounding millet: "Very few African women possess even minimal technical knowledge, making the application of advanced technology virtually impossible"**

insidious conditioning is perhaps even more dangerous than traditional education.

To conclude, the role of women at the current stage of our development is multiple and varied, as it spreads from the economy of the family unit to the national economy. Nevertheless, their role remains insufficient. Women represent 51 percent of our population, but only participate in a minute proportion in the production of the wealth of the country.

Women should be given an effective role to play in the development of modern Africa. They have contributed to its economic development when they have

been given equal access to education and training. But these are only a handful of privileged women. Most women are either poorly qualified or too tired from the constant struggle that they wage against apartheid and in favor of peace in their countries. For the former, there is hope insofar as there is the political will in various countries to undertake special efforts toward improving the conditions of women and to link these with the overall task of national development.

For the latter, no possibility is left open to them to put their talents to use while their countries are suffering under the weight of fratricidal and racist wars. One cannot talk of their contribution to development without bringing them peace which is the driving force behind progress and social well-being.

African women hope that their governments will commit themselves to providing increased professional training and access to information which is required to make them conscious of the basic foundations of development. Looking toward the year 2000, what is needed in Africa is to elaborate and apply development policies which will transform women into a more dynamic economic force.

The 19th century saw the emergence of the machine as an instrument of development. Mechanization pushed to its ultimate limits involved the progressive alienation of man since it required physical strength and work at a fast pace. At this stage, women were certainly handicapped.

But since the middle of the 20th century and even more so at the dawn of the 21st century, the struggle between man and the machine has been turned to man's advantage. Scientific techniques, data processing, and automation made conditions of work and production less strenuous. In the future, production will no longer be the realm of the strongest. Rather, technology can be at the service of both men and women, both being of equal intelligence.

That is why we think that in the years to come, as long as we plan and strive toward it now, women will play a more instrumental role in Africa's economic development, following from the inspiration of their sisters from the United States. □

# Changing Attitudes: A Cooperative Effort

While African governments have acknowledged the importance of strengthening women's contributions to their national economies, effective change can only come about through cooperative efforts which take into account African cultural and traditional values.

BY CHIEF EMEKA ANYAOKU

The ambitions of African women like those of women and men everywhere, are conditioned by their social context. When we speak of change, therefore, we are speaking of changes both in women themselves and in their societies—changes that interact with each other.

The role of women in traditional African societies varies considerably in different parts of the vast continent. But it is accurate to discern common threads which together comprise a set of attitudes significantly different from those of women in the developed industrial societies. Most basic of all perhaps is the fact that in Africa today, family-centered values are still widely held, and the support and interdependence of the family members affect the economic and social activities of women as well as men members of the family.

Each and every family member, even the very old and very young, has a role to play. These family roles were traditionally complementary and often a source of great satisfaction to the individual family members. This strong sense of family is a valuable resource which can be used in African development efforts and to improve the position

of women. It is also a matrix which molds what emerges and what can emerge in matriarchal societies.

The traditional African family almost invariably has a man at the head, and the care and upbringing of children is seen as the responsibility of the woman. In the African family, both boy and girl children spend the years of childhood principally with the mother. Only when the boy is of an age to work does he spend time with his father. The sharply differentiated concepts of men's and women's work are deeply ingrained in childhood. In normal traditional society, therefore, women and men perform different tasks.

The problem arises when the attitudes of the industrialized countries are brought to bear upon these separate activities, and some are judged as superior and others as inferior, with the women normally performing what is seen as inferior tasks. Such judgments are alien to the traditional African viewpoint which finds the justification for its social action not in the part but in the whole. Traditional African attitudes toward the different roles of each family member can best be likened to the different roles of the basic parts of an engine, where the importance of each part is recognized equally, and none is judged inherently inferior to any other.

The problem arises from the inexorable move from traditional to contempo-

rary society, a move accompanied by changes in attitude. With the spread of education and increasing economic difficulties, more and more families are under strain and seeking security from outside employment, rather than within the home. With an urge for personal progress comparable to that found among women in industrialized countries, more African women, particularly those who are better educated, desire to participate in decisions which affect them and are calling for resources to help them make a fuller contribution to development. Educated African women, like their sisters in industrialized countries, would like to be able to choose careers and have access to those careers once chosen. Equal opportunities across the whole socioeconomic spectrum are important to them.

The majority of African women are seeking women's liberation in the form of increased support for the contribution they make to family, social, and economic life. Many would certainly reject the kind of role reversal with men which is sometimes demanded by women in the industrialized countries, but all African women, whether urban or rural, would affirm that there are impediments in the way of the changes they desire.

In much of Africa, the broad division of labor which still exists between men and women creates specific handicaps for women. During the colonial era, the

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Eric Groetzing

**Chief Emeka Anyaoku: "The sharply differentiated concepts of men's and women's work are deeply ingrained in childhood"**

educational, legal, administrative, and commercial systems introduced from outside provided opportunities for African advancement, but these were mainly openings for men with the development of mining and the introduction of cash crops. Women were normally left to produce a significant part of the food required for the family's subsistence, though this was sometimes supplemented with earnings from small-scale trading. Today women are the main food and agricultural producers. This is especially so in parts of Africa, particularly southern Africa, where there is heavy migration of men from the rural to the urban areas or to the mines. Estimates vary on the proportion of African food production for which women are responsible, but even the most conservative estimates range between 60 and 80 percent.

Women also have an important established role in the informal sector of the economy in such activities as market trading, for which they are famous in Ghana and Nigeria, in small-scale processing of agricultural products, and in

weaving and dress-making. It is not, therefore, a question of bringing women into the economic system. They are already carrying a very important and heavy burden within it. It is much more a question of changing the nature of their involvement to make it more meaningful and productive for themselves, for their national economies, and for their societies as a whole.

That Africa has benefited from the upsurge of interest in the socio-economic situation of women, due partly to the United Nations Decade for Women, is cause for reflection. In 1980, specific measures relating to women were included in the Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa from 1980 to 2000, which was adopted by Africa's leaders at their Lagos Summit. In the Lagos Plan of Action, African governments fully acknowledged the importance of giving special attention to the place of women in the economy. The leaders agreed on the need for a strategy to strengthen the participation and contribution of women through the whole spectrum of the economy from

agriculture, industry and trade, through science and technology and mass media, to population and family life. Two points in the Plan of Action are of special interest: "Steps should be taken to include women in higher administrative and policy-making levels, and steps should also be taken to lessen the domestic burden of rural women and also provide the supporting services for women workers."

The question may then justly be asked: If African governments have recorded their full agreement in such fine well-meaning terms, surely the worst is over for African women and better times are just around the corner? Regrettably, there are still serious handicaps to women's progress in relation to the agreed objectives in both traditional and modern African societies. Of course, the two types of societies overlap. Traditional attitudes are not necessarily absent from the living rooms and kitchens of Lagos and Nairobi despite the presence of television sets and refrigerators. Similarly, the transistor revolution and the attitudes of modern life have reached many African villages. Nevertheless, it is in rural Africa that women face the most formidable obstacles to full participation in the economy.

One important factor contributing to slow growth in the agricultural sector is the lack of recognition of women's important role in food production, processing, storage, and distribution, as well as in trade. Moreover, women are often at a disadvantage when it comes to utilizing available services. The problem is deep-rooted. Although credit facilities are technically and theoretically available to women as well as men, fewer women than men can put up the necessary collateral in the form of land titles, deeds, and houses, so women tend to look to relatives and other informal sources for finance.

While the situation has improved for some women in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, where some of them are starting to have equal access to finance, there are many reasons why rural women tend to be at a serious disadvantage. Illiteracy and unfamiliarity with banking procedures and the lack of such facilities in remote areas all militate against rural women. Problems of inadequate infrastructure affect men as well as women, but in the rural



areas, it is women who have to cope with the lack of transportation in bringing in food and firewood and the lack of water for agricultural and domestic tasks. Poor systems of processing, storage, handling, and distribution all increase their burden.

Also, extension services tend to favor male producers. In many countries, men receive training in better cropping methods and more effective use of pesticides and fertilizers. Women are given training in home economics and handicrafts in what is all too often called "women's work," despite the fact that women are the main producers of the food. Extension services would clearly make a greater impact if they specifically included women in their programs, in view of the great importance of women in agriculture. Research and development also fail to take the needs of rural women into full account; it is necessary

to find ways of assessing these needs and devising technology and services to meet them. Efforts to modernize the rural areas in Africa have not always succeeded in improving the situation for women, and, in some instances, have actually worsened it by curtailing their traditional economic activities and sources of income.

One example is the disappearance of communal land-tenure rights through land reform which has often deprived women of rights and of land use which they have long enjoyed. Although women can and occasionally do buy land to operate cocoa, food, vegetable, and poultry farms, it is necessary for land reform to be accompanied by better access to financial resources to enable more women to purchase their own land and other assets.

In some areas, strict religious and traditional laws still inhibit women from

acquiring assets in their own right. Women are most constrained in the purest Islamic states, where attitudes are conditioned by age-old historical and cultural traditions. Modernization must therefore take into account local beliefs and deal with women's needs in ways which are effective but mindful of local sensitivities.

In addition to religious practices, there is also the immense power of custom. Women in rural Africa are often trapped in a cycle of subordination to male requirements in which a woman's duties may be defined as cooking her husband's food, brewing his beer, fetching water, keeping the home and compound clean, weeding the garden, harvesting and storing crops, and being solely responsible for the children. Although that description comes from a study of Uganda's Tesu people, it accurately depicts the situation in much of



Rice harvesting in Senegal: "Today women are the main food and agricultural producers"

Ray Wilkin/United Nations

rural Africa. And the impediment to change is not just the subordination of women to men's needs, but also the crushing burden of the work itself.

In the small-scale trading and handicraft sector, which bridges the rural and the modern aspects of African economies, there are also obstacles in the way of progress for women. Of course, a few

administration, business, industry, and government. A few have even penetrated professional and political preserves which were once exclusively male. However, the majority of women are still concentrated in the sectors where traditional barriers constitute handicaps to their full involvement in African economies and national develop-

These days, problems are created by the greater isolation of city life and the high cost of employing domestic helpers.

It goes without saying that education is the real pathway to progress. But while more and more girls are enrolled in schools, colleges, and universities, their drop-out rates and female illiteracy remain very high. In the past, parents have preferred to educate their boys, and the girls have often withdrawn after a few years of schooling to help out at home or on the farm. Tradition often encouraged girls to marry early. Fortunately, prejudice against the education of girls has now virtually disappeared.

However, technical education in some cases is still geared to boys' needs. Women often have difficulty in gaining access to both agricultural and industrial training programs, and many countries provide far more places for men than for women. Stereotyped attitudes lead many governments to perceive vocational training for women mainly in terms of home economics, nutrition, handicrafts, child-care, gardening, and office work.

One acid test of how fully women are integrated into national life is the degree of their participation in politics. For most societies, politics remains the most effective channel for formulating and self-guarding the laws and norms under which the society exists. It is especially important that women be encouraged to play as full a part as possible in political activities. Many African countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Ghana afford a number of examples where the role of women in political mobilization and election campaigns is among the most active and effective aspects of national politics. Many women's organizations are supported by government, and most major political parties have women's wings. Women have been prominent in the liberation struggles of several countries. The women combatants of Zimbabwe and Namibia cannot be expected to return to traditional life-styles. A Zimbabwean woman freedom fighter, interviewed early in 1980, said the armed struggle has really changed the position of women because now they have positions and education equal to that of men.

The women working for Namibia's in-



Nigeria Info

**Market women, Nigeria: "For most women traders, profits are low and their entrepreneurial abilities are not nurtured or promoted"**

women have acquired considerable wealth and prestige through trading consumer and agricultural products. However, a significant number of women are still restricted from expanding their economic activities by their limited access to financial credit and resources. For most women traders, profits are low, and their entrepreneurial abilities are not nurtured or promoted. With adequate support services, their energies could be valuably channeled into processing and small-scale manufacturing with benefit to the general economy.

Turning to the modern sector of the African economies, there is no doubt that significant progress has been made. With the spread of education, increasing numbers of women are participating in

ment, especially at the decision-making level. In many parts of Africa, as in other developing countries, the legal framework providing for equality of opportunity and preventing discrimination against women in employment already exists, although perhaps not completely. But the deep-rooted influences of traditional social norms and practices perpetuate stereotyped attitudes of women in paid employment.

Also the traditional family commitments and general lack of urban preschool facilities, such as nurseries, limit many women's opportunities for paid work outside the home. In more traditional communities, elderly grandparents and other helpers, both paid and unpaid, would look after the young children while women went out to work.

dependence share the same sense of equality. Training programs for Namibian refugees are supported by the British Commonwealth Secretariat, and a group of trainees now in Malta includes women who are learning mechanical engineering skills appropriate to the needs of the future independent Namibia, and to the equal place of women in its society and economy. It is true, however, that women have not yet reached the highest strata of African political life. Africa does not yet have its Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, or Margaret Thatcher.

My strategy for influencing African attitudes toward fuller participation would have three goals. First, it would work toward effecting attitudinal and psychological changes in women themselves to help them change their own situations. Confidence building, information dissemination, and training in the skills of public participation and management would play a major part. Often women themselves are unaware of training requirements and opportunities. Many lack the confidence to avail themselves of such opportunities. Part of the problem is psychological. The combative nature of no-holds-barred economic and political life, particularly the grueling struggle for success and fulfillment under adverse economic circumstances, may perhaps be at odds with the traditional female instinct.

A change of attitude on the part of women and the confidence to assume full professional responsibilities would be substantially stimulated by the provision of proper support services such as child-care facilities. This does not necessarily mean elaborate community structures on the Western model. Instead, traditional African sociability and ideas of group responsibility would play a useful role.

Practical measures to change the actual circumstances of women according to their needs in the African context will be an essential part of any comprehensive strategy. This would have to include strengthening the legal framework and enforcement of laws benefiting women and strengthening the institutions that provide the information and education, research and statistics on women, and resources necessary to improve their situation. National action would be supplemented by regional

action with the Lagos Plan as a beacon to guide all efforts. The Lagos Plan of Action calls for the establishment of appropriate bodies to monitor revisions of the laws and offices to advise women of their rights. It also calls for basic family codes to be drawn up where they do not already exist and stresses the need to involve women themselves in the law-making process.

Legislation will not by itself do away with the problems arising from deeply rooted practice and traditions. Laws are most effective where the need for them is recognized, which is principally a matter of education. Many African countries have established organizational missions to coordinate and guide the activities of women's advancement. A number of women's bureaus have been set up to provide government with the information and advice needed to ensure that women's issues are fully considered within a framework of national policy planning.

Just as I have sought to consider the needs and aspirations of women in a specifically African context, so it is appropriate that I should adopt a realistic perspective in considering the attitudes of African men. It cannot be said that all African men are unaware of the contribution that women make to the economy and of the need for improvement in their situation. The Lagos Plan of Action was agreed to by the men who lead Africa today. They have shown themselves fully capable of taking the advice of responsible women, understanding their needs, and incorporating them into

this blueprint for the future of Africa. It cannot be denied, however, that a problem exists.

In most African cultures, the male is firmly head of the family with an undisputed authority over all family matters. Awareness of particularly male responsibilities begins in childhood where clear differentiation of roles according to gender is the norm. First and foremost, a boy is trained not to be effeminate. In some societies, it is unmanly and disgraceful for a male teenager to engage in such feminine activities as grinding grain, fetching water, and even cooking.

I believe I am justified in claiming that male attitudes toward the role of African women in most parts of Africa have not substantially evolved beyond the traditional norms. They will change only with education and changes in circumstances and time, and probably not through frontal assault. Regiments of women are not unknown in African history, but it is rather hard to imagine the bastions of African male prejudice being torn down by regiments of liberated women in the mold of those who have brought considerable changes in the United States. Moreover, as we have seen, that is not the way of African women themselves.

We must therefore work a lot harder for cooperative change. To this end, we must involve in our work not only the policy-makers and chief implementors of national policies, but also the general population. Those of us who are active in the international community are conscious of our responsibilities in this endeavor. □

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## The United Nations Decade for Women and its N.G.O. Forum

July 1985

In July of 1985, Nairobi, Kenya will be the setting for an historic event — the third and final global meeting of The United Nations Decade for Women and the N.G.O. Forum. Women from around the world will gather here for official and non-governmental meetings to review accomplishments of the Decade, to identify problems and barriers encountered during the Decade, and to formulate strategies for advancing the cause of women. Come be a part of this momentous event.

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# Three Women of Kano: Modern Women and Traditional Life

Zainab, considered the only truly modern woman in Kano, attempted to balance her role in Muslim society with her ambition and abilities. Her story mirrors the struggles of African women who find themselves caught between custom and modernity.

BY BARBARA J. CALLAWAY AND  
KATHERINE E. KLEEMAN

“There is no freedom for women in marriage—no freedom at all.” This is the blunt assessment of Zainab, a middle-aged woman living in Kano city in Kano state, Nigeria. For women like Zainab, who have been exposed to the freedom accorded women in Western societies, the constraints on a married woman’s life in Kano can be overwhelming.

Yet, the strength of tradition, combined with the all-pervasive influence of Islam, exerts a powerful influence on even the most educated and well-traveled of these women. Despite the pain and sacrifice entailed, most of these women ultimately choose or at least accept married life as prescribed for them by custom, rather than attempting to support themselves as unmarried

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women, or to restructure male/female relationships within marriage.

Vignettes from the lives of three women in Kano illustrate the pressures toward conformity for Kano’s middle and upper-class women. Such issues do not even arise for the overwhelming majority of women who live in seclusion or *purdah* (*kulle* in the Hausa language) in traditional marriages. A few introductory observations set the stage for the stories of these women’s struggles to combine education and non-traditional aspirations with familial pressure to adhere to societal expectations.

Approximately 10 million people live in Kano state, 2.5 million of them in Kano city and 5 million in the metropolitan area. Most are adherents of a strict and conservative version of Islam, one which has a considerable—and to the Western perception, sometimes contradictory—effect on the daily lives of women. While the concept of “women’s liberation” is perceived as un-Islamic and alien, education of women in the service of their spiritual, intellectual, and physical well-being is strongly encouraged. Upon completing their education, though, the women of Kano are expected to conform strictly to local custom and discipline.

In recent years, there has been tremendous growth in female education in Kano state, with the government now encouraging parents to send their daughters to school. In 1975, fewer than 2 percent of primary school-age girls in Kano were in school; today that figure has grown to 40 percent. The Agency for Mass Education, founded in 1980, is attacking the problem of adult illiteracy and mounting special efforts to reach women, only 1 percent of whom can read. Because women in seclusion cannot go out during the day, classes are offered at night.

The women study basic literacy, hygiene, nutrition, and the Islamic religion. When the classes began in 1980, 400 women participated. By 1981, with 15 additional education centers established throughout the state, enrollment had jumped to 1,140. Today there are 19 centers with an enrollment of over 7,000 women. When the newest center opened in Kano city in early 1983, 700 women seeking admission appeared on the first day. Thus, the dramatic increase in both the opportunity and the desire for education suggests intense change in the position and status of women in Islamic Hausaland. But, Hausa marriage and the conservative

Islamic faith are constraints on any such change.

Most of the women who attend adult literacy classes arrive with babies strapped to their backs and perhaps one to three small children in tow. They come after a full day of household chores, often with the goal of setting an example for a daughter so, as one put it, "She won't grow up an illiterate like me." When they return home, it is to special women's quarters, for 98 percent of the women of Kano live, according to Islamic tradition, in seclusion. These women will most likely not be alone though, since many will be one of several wives of an individual man.

The Prophet Mohammed decreed that a man could have as many as four wives if he could support them, and the overwhelming majority of men in Kano are polygamous. For them, multiple wives are a symbol of wealth and social status. The most successful men are pressured to take three or four wives even if, as a matter of personal choice, they would prefer not to. Even poor men—drivers or messengers on the lowest rungs of public sector employment—are likely to have two wives.

For men, the average age at first marriage is around 30, since they must be financially secure and able to support their wives before marrying. Most girls, however, marry before the onset of puberty, at an average age of 10 to 12. This means that many girls find themselves married to men who could easily be their grandfathers. Typically, five years might elapse between a man's first and second marriages, but wives two, three, and four are apt to arrive in quick succession.

Just as wives can appear on the scene suddenly, they can also disappear from a household. Divorce is common in Kano; well over 50 percent of women will be divorced at least once. Successful men may divorce their older wives to take younger ones. Traditionally, only men can initiate divorce. Today women can seek divorce by appealing to an Islamic court under the Sharia, or Islamic law.

But the *talaq*, or unilateral divorce, long since eliminated by most Islamic nations, survives in Nigeria and is available only to men. If a man repeats the words "I divorce you" three times in the presence of two witnesses, the mar-

riage is dissolved. The wife has no recourse or protection. She usually loses custody of her children and must return to her family, since she is not entitled to support, and a woman working and living alone would be labeled a "free woman" (the term for a prostitute).

For a married man and his wives, the typical home in Kano features an entrance room leading to separate men's and women's quarters. In the women's area, rooms or suites for each wife border a central space for cooking and washing. Each wife can expect to have at least a sleeping room of her own, and in the homes of most middle-class men, wives have individual sitting rooms as well. The very richest men usually have multi-story homes where the public sitting rooms are downstairs and the hus-

band's private quarters above. The wives' rooms or apartments are arranged around an inner courtyard.

It was the construction of just such a typical Kano home, complete with apartments for three wives, that gave Aisha her first clue that she would be one of multiple wives in a household far more traditional than she had anticipated. Daughter of an important traditional ruler, she is one of the few highly educated women in the area. She was the first wife of her father's sister's son; such "cross-cousin" marriages are preferred in Kano. She had known her husband since childhood, and he approved of her education. After an arranged marriage to him, she completed secondary school while he finished his university studies.



"Most of the women attending adult literacy classes arrive with babies strapped to their backs and small children in tow"

Nigeria Info

When he went to England to pursue a doctorate—one of only a handful of Kano state men sponsored for such studies abroad—she went with him. During their six years there, she earned the equivalent of master's degree in social work. Upon returning to Kano, they moved into a house on the university campus, where he held a faculty position. She secured a high-level social service job.

made three important decisions independently, not consulting her at all.

First, he decided to move the family, which by now included three small children, away from the campus to his family's village near Kano. For Aisha, this meant that she would have to commute daily to her job, which by itself might have been only a minor challenge.

Second, he built a new house for his family. Seeing that it contained three

As the first wife of the village's leading citizen, Aisha carries an enormous responsibility—feeding as many as 50 of her husband's relatives and friends every night. Under Aisha's direction, a meal of rice or yam with soup, usually including beef, chicken, goat, fish, or lamb along with a few vegetables, is prepared. While other women handle most of the actual food preparation, Aisha must supervise and do whatever is necessary to see that the meal is complete. When the meal will not stretch to feed the entire crowd, she might have to kill and pluck a last-minute extra chicken.

Families in Kano seldom sit down together in their homes for a meal. Men, women, and children generally eat separately. Perhaps 10 or 12 men will arrive together at the home of Aisha's husband, finding a place to share their meal and serving themselves. Children will wander in with their friends carrying their bowls and go off to another corner to eat. Older women eat together in groups of two or three, while the three wives of the household generally catch as catch can unless they happen to have friends in who will join them for dinner.

For Aisha, now in her mid-30s, having a career while playing out her expected role is a difficult balancing act. Yet, while she was unhappy at the changes imposed by her husband, she believes that it is the will of Allah, and she accepts what she perceives to be her fate as a woman. In order to secure her position, however, she has had three more children. She believes her husband will not divorce her, since this would cause the younger wives to assume responsibility for her children.

In order to insure they will have children to support them in their old age, women have as many children as they can. With the infant mortality rate at around 50 percent in Kano, most women expect only half of their children to reach adulthood. Because Aisha's children will grow up in an unusually healthy environment in an educated household, she does not expect to lose her children. Still, one of her younger co-wives has already lost an infant son.

Fatima has a more rebellious spirit than Aisha, and her response to her lot as a woman has been more troubled. Also born of a family of high traditional status, she entered an arranged mar-



Aimasy-Vaughney/United Nations

**Children studying the Koran: "While 'women's liberation' is perceived as un-Islamic and alien, education of women in the service of their spiritual, intellectual, and physical well-being is strongly encouraged"**

When she married, Aisha had understood that her husband would not take a second wife without her permission. Such a stipulation can be negotiated as part of the marriage contract. Usually these contracts cover chiefly the financial arrangements between families, but increasingly among elite families, provisions concerning education or additional wives figure in the bargaining. Because she had such an agreement, Aisha was startled to learn, three years after returning to Kano, that her husband had

apartments in the wives' quarters gave Aisha her first indication that her husband would make his own decision about new wives, without the consultation she had anticipated.

Third, he brought in the two new wives. The first, a 17-year old student, moved in shortly after the move to the village. The second, a 12-year old, arrived a year later. These two wives live in seclusion, while Aisha, in the local parlance, "travels out," retaining her job in the city.

riage at the age of nine, but her husband and her family agreed that she could complete her education before going to live in her husband's home. She loved school and always did well. That she had a reputation as a "difficult" female stemmed in part from her adamant insistence on remaining in school. An uncle in the Nigerian foreign service took her abroad for secondary schooling and junior college-level training, even though she was married. In the meantime, her husband took other wives, but he and Fatima's family always assumed that she would eventually return to Kano.

Fatima, however, had other intentions. She strongly disliked her husband and never believed that she would have to live with him. Her family remained determined that she would and ultimately insisted that she come home to him. Because by this time he had attained a high position in the governmental hierarchy, a scandal erupted when Fatima refused to live with her husband. Finally, when her own family threatened to evict her from their home, she relented. But she so tormented the younger wives of the household that in time she provoked her husband into pronouncing *talaq*. Though he subsequently regretted this action and wanted her back, in accordance with Islamic teachings she could not be forced to return to him unless she had another intervening marriage, and she steadfastly refused to marry.

At the time she was interviewed, Fatima's reputation as a rebel remained intact. Her father had all but disowned her, but because her mother had her own quarters, Fatima was permitted to live with her. She had a good job in the media, but at work she was labeled "notorious," and her male colleagues treated her with great contempt and disrespect.

Recently Fatima has decided on her own to remarry, this time to a co-worker who already has two wives and who will allow her to keep her job. She has calculated that being a third wife is preferable to incurring continued hostility for being unmarried—and besides, she wants to have children. Essentially, after her rebellious youth, Fatima is ready to conform to the demands of her society.

For Zainab, the price of conformity

has proven too high. In fact, several of the women interviewed in Kano remarked that there was only one "modern women" there—Zainab. Though she has tried more than once to live the prescribed traditional life, what she absorbed in her travels abroad, along with her own spirited nature, has made that impossible.

Zainab is bright and articulate. Though not highly educated, she has great presence and force of personality, along with an adaptability that has allowed her to learn and grow. She married young, becoming the second wife of a much older man. Zainab soon became the favorite wife as well, and when he went abroad as a foreign service officer, he took her along.

While at her husband's posts in Latin America and the United States, Zainab bore five children. She also took classes in practical topics—sewing, fashion,

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**"Truckloads of men from the local Department of Public Works appeared and demolished Zainab's house, contending that 'No house built by a woman can be safe.'"**

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crafts, and others—gaining skills and confidence. Upon their return to Kano, her husband announced that Zainab must henceforth live in seclusion, but by that time she could not remain submissive. In the women's quarters to which she had been banished, and to which two other wives had been added, she harassed the other women mercilessly until their complaints forced her husband to divorce her.

Zainab's family immediately arranged another marriage for her. She wanted to establish a dress-making business using the skills she had gained abroad, and the new husband agreed to this. However, his two other wives turned the tables on Zainab, tormenting her until she could no longer bear to remain. When she "packed out," as the local expression goes, her husband had little choice; rather than bear the humiliation of a runaway wife, he divorced her.

That was 15 years ago. Left to her own devices, Zainab used her entrepreneurial skill to establish several businesses. She began with dress-making, and soon her empire had expanded to include a hair-dressing salon, a small contracting concern, and several market stalls. Because she came from a family of high status and had what buyers wanted, her businesses thrived despite being owned by an unmarried woman, and she grew wealthy.

Eventually she decided to build her own home, and she erected a two-story house in the center of the city. Just before construction was completed, truckloads of men from the local Department of Public Works appeared one day and demolished the house. The responsible officials contended, "No house built by a woman can be safe."

Discouraged by this setback, Zainab finally acceded to the marriage proposal of a close male friend who had been her protector and supporter. But, even though she was past her child-bearing years, he immediately forced her into seclusion once again and appropriated all of her businesses for himself.

Now, having "packed out" again, Zainab is rebuilding her life. She has a new hair-dressing salon and a man sewing for her, but she has yet to restart her other businesses. She has insisted that her two daughters leave Kano; they now attend school in England, and she is urging them to stay there and "marry a stranger."

Despite what they have seen of other lifestyles in other lands, comprehending another way of life for themselves is virtually impossible for these women, steeped in the Moslem tradition and surrounded by women living according to the rules. All three were determined to make their lives different, but for two, the stresses have been too much to overcome, and they have conformed to local expectations. Only Zainab, after bitter disappointment in her attempts to combine the two worlds, has opted to abandon the role assigned her by custom. She can do this in part because she has a powerful family willing to tolerate her non-conformity. But for all three women, one message is clear. At present, the women of Kano must not imagine that they can "have it all." □

riage at the age of nine, but her husband and her family agreed that she could complete her education before going to live in her husband's home. She loved school and always did well. That she had a reputation as a "difficult" female stemmed in part from her adamant insistence on remaining in school. An uncle in the Nigerian foreign service took her abroad for secondary schooling and junior college-level training, even though she was married. In the meantime, her husband took other wives, but he and Fatima's family always assumed that she would eventually return to Kano.

Fatima, however, had other intentions. She strongly disliked her husband and never believed that she would have to live with him. Her family remained determined that she would and ultimately insisted that she come home to him. Because by this time he had attained a high position in the governmental hierarchy, a scandal erupted when Fatima refused to live with her husband. Finally, when her own family threatened to evict her from their home, she relented. But she so tormented the younger wives of the household that in time she provoked her husband into pronouncing *talaq*. Though he subsequently regretted this action and wanted her back, in accordance with Islamic teachings she could not be forced to return to him unless she had another intervening marriage, and she steadfastly refused to marry.

At the time she was interviewed, Fatima's reputation as a rebel remained intact. Her father had all but disowned her, but because her mother had her own quarters, Fatima was permitted to live with her. She had a good job in the media, but at work she was labeled "notorious," and her male colleagues treated her with great contempt and disrespect.

Recently Fatima has decided on her own to remarry, this time to a co-worker who already has two wives and who will allow her to keep her job. She has calculated that being a third wife is preferable to incurring continued hostility for being unmarried—and besides, she wants to have children. Essentially, after her rebellious youth, Fatima is ready to conform to the demands of her society.

For Zainab, the price of conformity

has proven too high. In fact, several of the women interviewed in Kano remarked that there was only one "modern woman" there—Zainab. Though she has tried more than once to live the prescribed traditional life, what she absorbed in her travels abroad, along with her own spirited nature, has made that impossible.

Zainab is bright and articulate. Though not highly educated, she has great presence and force of personality, along with an adaptability that has allowed her to learn and grow. She married young, becoming the second wife of a much older man. Zainab soon became the favorite wife as well, and when he went abroad as a foreign service officer, he took her along.

While at her husband's posts in Latin America and the United States, Zainab bore five children. She also took classes in practical topics—sewing, fashion,

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**"Truckloads of men from the local Department of Public Works appeared and demolished Zainab's house, contending that 'No house built by a woman can be safe.'"**

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crafts, and others—gaining skills and confidence. Upon their return to Kano, her husband announced that Zainab must henceforth live in seclusion, but by that time she could not remain submissive. In the women's quarters to which she had been banished, and to which two other wives had been added, she harassed the other women mercilessly until their complaints forced her husband to divorce her.

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# Revolution or Evolution?

Membership in Kenya's powerful women's organizations provides a platform for women's issues and an avenue for influencing public opinion. But the challenge for Kenyan women is to translate the political skills acquired in these groups into effective action on the national level.

BY JOAN HARRIS

Kenya is distinguished among its East African neighbors. After 23 years of independence, it is the most developed, the most visited, and despite an August 1982 coup attempt, still considered the most stable nation in the region. All of this rests largely on a perception of Kenya as "Western-oriented." But the social changes taking place there have an uniquely African framework, particularly for women.

"Broken Promises, Unrealized Dreams" might be the title of a drama featuring Kenyan women. It will be on full view in Nairobi in July when women convene at the conference marking the end of the UN Decade for Women. But the women both viewing and acting out this drama will be mainly from the developed world and from a relatively privileged strata of Kenyan society. The majority of Kenyan women, who live in the rural areas, will not even know it is going on.

In many developed nations, women's struggles have advanced, changed or blurred male/female roles, depending on one's point of view. In Kenya, however, these roles have been razor-sharp for

centuries. Men criticize women who deviate from the traditional norm as "trying to behave like a man," or acting un-African, or finally, being a prostitute. For Kenyan men to think of women as more than wives, mothers, or food gatherers is a disorienting experience.

Yet as is often the case historically, the crises of revolution and the upheavals of modern transition have pushed both men and women into new territory. Kenya's 9.1 million women were no small part of the ten-year struggle to rid the country of colonial rule. The Kenya Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau) couldn't have functioned without women alongside, tending the wounded, supplying food and ammunition, and providing vital reconnaissance.

But what happened with the advent of independence in 1963 was an all too familiar scenario: Independence that was meant for all the people turned out to be a transfer of power from the British male elite to the Kenyan male elite. Women were equal only on paper, and often not even there. Government speeches flattered them in the vague, idealistic rhetoric of "African socialism," touting their importance to "development" and "nation-building."

But the facts say they've been left out. Only one woman was re-elected to Kenya's parliament in 1983 and two others were deposed in a body of 158 men.

And though over the years, a number of Kenyan women have come to the political forefront, their power has been insignificant due to their small numbers in parliament (never more than four at one time).

Although there are only a few women in parliament, there are tens of thousands of them who belong to powerful women's groups. Power for women in Kenya has been the power to protect common interests. If it weren't for these well-organized, high-volume membership groups, the few advances women have made would not have even reached the back-burner, which is where women's issues stay in this traditionally male-dominated society.

There are two major women's groups in Kenya, the giant Maendaleo Ya Wanawake (Women's Progress Movement), the oldest, and its umbrella organization, the National Council of Kenyan Women (NCKW), with the second largest membership. It is through their leadership in these groups that many now-prominent women have honed their political skills and influenced public opinion. Maendaleo's well-known leader, Jane Kiano, has become a public figure, as has Wangari Mathai, until recently the two-term president of NCKW. Mathai is well-known for courageously fighting the scandal-sheet treatment of her own divorce trial which challenged the mar-

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riage laws. Hers was the most famous case of 1981, and the fallout for women continues even today.

It is true that nothing remotely resembling a women's liberation movement exists in Kenya. In fact, very few women would want to be labeled as "feminist." Some women are content to be called "women's rights activists," but most, either rural or urban housewives, totally dependent economically and psychologically on their husbands, think of their membership in these groups as community work.

Semantics aside, many say a revolution of sorts is underway, if for no other reason than that women are tired of being beasts of burden and don't want to continue hauling loads on their backs and heads as a way of life. Come the revolution—though it is more likely to be an evolution—it is the women's groups who will be the conduit.

Both key groups aim their programs, from health care to handicraft cooperatives, at the problems of rural women, who make up 70 percent of the female population. They also for the most part make up the 70 percent illiteracy rate for women—twice that of men.

The rural woman's life and work are inseparable: She is both farmer and homemaker from sunrise to sunset, from the moment she is able to walk until she can walk no more. If she is fortunate, she'll have attended primary school, which is now compulsory until age 12. But more often than not, she is uneducated. At about age 15, the rural woman enters an arranged marriage, her husband's family compound, and a cycle of child-bearing and child-rearing for as long as her health will allow. She might make extra money by selling home-brewed beer or joining a handicraft coop, but her routine rarely varies.

This is not to say that things have stood still for women since 1963. Legal advances, though slow in coming, have had a profound impact upon society once they have permeated through the layers of cultural traditions and mores and directly affect women's lives.

Until recently, female circumcision, still widely practiced in many parts of the countryside, was such a sensitive issue that discussion of it was taboo. But attitudes are changing. The practice has been waning over the years, particularly

due to the influence of Christianity, and in October 1981, President Moi banned it on health grounds. Even before the ban, however, women's leaders and health and social workers had swayed public opinion against it. In the end, however, it will not be the official ban but the women themselves who will decide the practice must stop.

Another major advance in women's rights came in 1977 with a bill that gave working mothers two months of paid maternity leave. Despite such benefits, a woman's entrance into the skilled labor force is still hampered by her lack of access to education and training. While more women are being educated, only 37 percent of high school graduates and only 19 percent of university graduates in Kenya are female. Women represent only 16 percent of the employed labor force and only 6 percent as jobholders who earn more than \$375 a month. Most women are considered to be doing well if they become primary school teachers, nurses, or secretaries.

However, daughters are assuming a more important place in the family than sons as more and more boys and men migrate to the cities, feeling little or no responsibility toward wife, children, or parents. Thus, family hopes are shifting from sons to daughters to land a job that will offer security to parents in their old age. Pressures on women are mounting.

While the issues of education and employment for women are critical, the primary battle surrounds married women's legal rights. "The one clear nuisance," says Dr. Eddah Gachukia, a former member of parliament, a lawyer, and head of the Host Planning Committee for the Non-Governmental Forum at the Decade Conference, "is the marriage laws."

There are four types of legally registered marriages—customary, statutory, Hindu, and Islam. "The overlap leads to a great deal of confusion and the male-dominated parliament has definitely shelved any attempt at unification," she says. "Although the law doesn't allow for the mixing of the various systems, men take advantage of women's lack of awareness and opt for the system that suits them at any given point in time."

Some women unknowingly enter "il-

legal" marriages that frequently end in disinheritance. A man who marries under the statutory law, the African Christian Marriage Act, cannot marry another wife—yet many do. The rural woman who works land that belongs to her husband is also involved in another common dilemma. The husband pockets the money for crops that she has harvested and hauled to the marketplace. He migrates to the city and then divorces her. Ignorant of the law, she becomes a penniless single head of household who has worked the land to which she has no legal rights.

Parliamentary records on marriage law debates yield some of the most revealing statements made by Kenyan politicians. In 1979, a bill was introduced to codify the marriage laws on polygamy, which still accounts for one-third of all marriages. (Recently enacted laws give the first wife 50 percent of community property.) In response to a section of the law dealing with corporal punishment, one MP said, "It is very African to teach women manners by beating them," and went on to add, "If this legislation is passed, even slapping your wife is ruled out."

Many of the urban working housewives I talked to said they considered a husband "a good man" as long as he didn't beat them. The Western equivalent of "good provider" doesn't apply. For most men, decisions on sharing their wages with their wives and children depend on whim. It is accepted that they spend their money as they wish—including on other women—though women, of course, are expected to be faithful and give all of their salary to the house and children.

While rural women are the majority and development activities center around them, leadership in the powerful women's groups is comprised of a strong core of urban intellectuals, many of whom are married or related to the political and professional elite. And more and more businesswomen, some of whom are part of Kenya's large Indian community, are gaining influence as a group.

Individually, the largest strides have been made in academia, with more women earning doctorates and lecturing at the university. Kenya has its share of brilliant, talented, and ambitious

women. A few, such as anthropologist Achola Pala Okeyo, are world-renowned. The obvious question, with so many women in so many well-organized groups, is why haven't women become a voting bloc, a pressure group, or even developed a common consciousness?

Kenyan journalists describe women as "timid," say they "lack confidence and drive," and claim they not only vote their husbands' choices in election, but go so far as to vote for male politicians who espouse "male-determined" policies. Such glaring women's issues as rape, sexual harassment, and prostitution are completely ignored. Why? Kenyan women would answer that basic issues are more pressing.

The answer, of course, is more complex. It lies in layers of male collusion—first from the missionary invasion, then from the colonialists, and finally from the self-interest of Kenyan men. It's a costly bill for entrance into the 20th century and one that adds up to Kenyan women's "timidity." It explains the conditioning that has robbed them of "confidence and drive."

First the missionaries denigrated African sexual mores and customs, calling them barbaric and immoral. Their crusade against polygamy, say many Kenyans, is as much to blame for today's baby boom as are other social factors. The average birth rate is 8.1 children per family, compared with 6.8 in 1962. With an annual growth rate of 4 percent, Kenya has the fastest growing population in the world.

In traditional times, women had four or five children, spaced four or five years apart, the usual weaning period during which men abstained from sex with their wives. Once her eldest child had married it was considered scandalous to become pregnant again. So, a woman's reproductive years were limited to about 20, and the number of her children to four or five. As a strategy to wipe out polygamy, the missionaries pushed cohabitation, say Kenyans, and it backfired: They got both. And, as the colonialist government replaced the chief's power, it also wiped out his authority to uphold traditional customs and taboos.

Today, the stigma once attached to an unmarried mother has all but disappeared, especially in the cities. The av-

erage firsts have all changed: first marriage, 17; first pregnancy, 15. Infants are nursed 13 months apart and born 33 months apart. And the love of large families continues. The issue is so sensitive that family planners push birth control only as a means of spacing until the next child.

The missionaries were a tough act to follow, but the British topped them. The settler regime seized the land, attracting cheap labor to the commercial farms and new industries. In the huge plantations, they introduced male-controlled cash crops of coffee and tea. This development disrupted the family structure beginning a pattern of labor migration, and it also undercut women economically, since they only grew subsistence crops. The British attitude toward the education of women was typically Victorian: why waste it on girls when they are only going to marry, procreate, and work on the family farm? Consequently, they built no schools for girls.

Boys, it was reasoned, would earn money to support families and parents in their old age. Besides, the British needed clerks at the very least, so this suited their plan. As industries grew and the need for warriors faded, young men drifted to the cities, which became the focus for the new century. And women stayed home in the countryside—barefoot, pregnant, and uneducated.

What has happened with women's land inheritance is a microcosm of the problems besetting Kenyan women. Under traditional or customary law, women had rights to use land and property, though no right of ownership. But when the colonial government initiated registration of land by title, it did not recognize that right, even when a woman was the head of her own household.

And since title deeds are now the essential "security" for guaranteeing development loans, women have limited access to credit. "So entrenched is this belief that land belongs to men," says Dr. Gachukia, "that when the Succession Act (1972) was undergoing amendment in Kenya's Parliament in 1980, and one of the clauses making girls rightful inheritors side by side with their brothers came up, a number of women farmers and leaders opposed the move, explaining their objection by the feeling

that girls would get married and move off to their husbands' households.

"Few, if any, envisaged having unmarried daughters. They did not want their sons-in-law to interfere with their sons' rightful inheritance, since sons-in-law would by the same practice have inherited land from their fathers." Dr. Gachukia sounds more exasperated than sarcastic when she says, "So the linear reasoning goes! None of the women envisaged having their daughters marry into poor and hence needy families."

Values have changed rapidly in Kenya in a miraculously short time, and in all likelihood, will continue to do so at breakneck speed. In such an atmosphere, cultural cohesion is paramount, and women, who are at the center of it all, will be expected to make the center hold.

All hopes for this, according to Annette Hutchins, director of the Women and African Development Program of the African-American Institute, are pinned on "the evolution of the educated woman." Younger women, she believes, will be the ones to integrate both their history and culture with a new politics for women. "Culture is a dynamic phenomenon," says Hutchins, "it moves, it barter. . . it cannot be used as an excuse for denying women their rights in Kenya."

In such an atmosphere, where the need to balance existing traditions with the pressures of inevitable change is central to both survival and growth, new role models sometimes emerge. Professor Wangari Mathai is undoubtedly the most tested feminist in Kenya. It is commonly felt that her celebrated divorce trial was an attempt to silence her. When she wouldn't be silent, she was jailed on contempt charges. She was re-elected president of the NCKW, but was later prevented from running for parliament on a technicality.

She puts it this way: "At this stage, it is probably risky for some people to speak vocally on these issues, but one thing I like about our women is they are very, very, very sensitive. You have to bear in mind all the other constraints. They will support you fully if you say something. They may not shout in the streets, but they will support you and give you a lot of courage to go on." □

## *Over \$1 billion raised for economic policy reform*

In an effort to prevent further economic decline in sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank has raised more than \$1 billion for nations that have initiated major policy reforms. The funds were pledged at a conference in Paris that concluded on February 1 and was attended by 23 donor nations.

France, Italy, and the World Bank will each give about \$150 million, and the Netherlands is committing nearly \$100 million to the "special facility," as the Bank calls the three-year program. Austria, Canada, and the Scandinavian countries are also making pledges.

Britain, Japan, Switzerland, and West Germany are committing a total of \$425 million for the program, funding which will not be under the direct administration of the World Bank and may have special conditions attached to it. Bank officials hope that it will be used for the same purposes as the direct multilateral assistance, however. Japan's share of these funds is \$300 million over the three-year period. The Arab states may pledge additional monies.

The U.S. has refused from the start to participate in the effort, citing a preference for its own Economic Policy Initiative, providing \$500 million over five years to African nations for economic policy reform.

The special facility is due to begin operating July 1. The main purpose of the program is to give fast-disbursing assistance in support of reforms in agriculture and other sectors. It will also provide project assistance for rehabilitating existing infrastructure rather than for starting new initiatives.

The aid will be in the form of long-term, interest-free credits, similar to those provided by the Bank's International Development Association (IDA). The recent replenishment to IDA, for the period from

July 1984 through June 1987, was only \$9 billion, rather than the \$15 billion that the Bank initially recommended. The donor nations had agreed to a \$12 billion replenishment, but the Reagan administration opposed that level, reducing the U.S. commitment. Other countries then followed the U.S. example, making proportionately lower contributions. Approximately one-third of IDA funding is expended in Africa.

When the Bank launched the drive for the special facility last August, its target was \$2 billion. A

more modest goal of \$1 billion was set prior to the meeting in Paris. The first countries to receive the funds will be Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Somalia, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia. These nations meet the program criteria in that they have begun efforts to reform their economies by undertaking measures such as currency devaluations and new pricing policies. Others that may also receive funds from the special facility include Benin, Burundi, Kenya, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zaire. ■

## *Anti-apartheid bills gain momentum in Congress and state legislatures*

In greater numbers than ever before, U.S. legislators are turning their attention to anti-apartheid measures. The growing interest has spawned dozens of bills since the Congress and state legislatures reconvened in January.

In Congress, the legislation ranges from Rep. Ronald Dellums' comprehensive package that includes a total trade embargo to piecemeal bans on specific items such as nuclear-related exports to South Africa or imports of South African uranium. Rep. Howard Berman has reintroduced legislation to reinstate controls on U.S. exports to the South African military and police. The new bill would also impose a ban on all computer sales to the South African government. Sen. William Proxmire has introduced comprehensive legislation in the Senate.

Many of the bills overlap or duplicate each other, and it is likely that a number of them will be consolidated into an omnibus bill. Legislation introduced by Reps. Howard Wolpe, Stephen Solarz, and William Gray may become the prime focus of attention. Their bill con-

tains provisions that were part of a major export administration act that almost passed in Congress last year, which included prohibitions on new U.S. investment in South Africa, bank loans to South Africa, and the importation of krugerrands.

Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives were meeting in mid-February to develop a bipartisan consensus on anti-apartheid legislation. The Republicans were pushing to include communist countries in the sanctions. While such legislation would have a better chance of gaining conservative support, it would also divert attention from South Africa.

Capitol Hill sources anticipate that a strategy for action on anti-apartheid legislation will be reached by as early as March. The compromise could move through Congress more quickly than the anti-apartheid measures of past years. Interest in South Africa and opposition to the apartheid system have intensified recently, due to media coverage of Bishop Desmond Tutu's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize, the continuing demonstrations outside

*Continued on next page*

## Congress tries to rush African famine aid

Members of Congress are attempting to expedite famine relief to Africa and to avoid the political wrangles that stalled the emergency aid last year. The famine relief will supplement funds of approximately \$373.5 million that the U.S. government has allocated for African famine relief so far in the 1985 fiscal year.

The famine relief effort seemed on its way to becoming a partisan issue when first a Democratic bill, then a Republican version, were introduced shortly after Congress reconvened in January. Democratic Congressmen Ted Weiss, Howard Wolpe, and Mickey Leland introduced a measure containing more than \$1 billion, while Republicans Marge Roekema and Silvio Conte offered a bill with \$495.5 million. The Reagan administration has requested only \$235 million in supplemental famine relief for 1985.

In mid-February, a bipartisan compromise was reached that in-

cluded a total of \$701.5 million—\$526.5 million for food and inland transportation and \$175 million for nonfood needs including refugee programs, disaster aid such as blankets, medicines and seeds, and longer-term projects. Sen. Howard Melcher introduced a bill in the Senate similar to the House Democrats' version, and Sens. Ted Kennedy and Robert Kasten were promoting an open-ended version that would provide whatever was needed to fill 50 percent of the unmet food needs in Africa, a commitment that the U.S. has met in the past. It is anticipated that the Senate will expedite the House bipartisan compromise, after it receives House approval.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization recently estimated that Africa's total food assistance needs in the 1984-85 year will be 6.6 million metric tons. Only 4.4 million metric tons of that total has been pledged. ■

## LEGISLATION continued

the South African embassy and consulates in the U.S., and protests and arrests in South Africa.

Meanwhile, legislatures in 27 states have debated divestment legislation so far in 1985. An additional five states (Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Nebraska) have already passed divestment bills. Most of the bills call for the withdrawal of public monies from banks and corporations that do business in and with South Africa. The chances are good that at least three more states will pass divestment bills this year, according to Dumisani Kumalo of the American Committee on Africa, who tracks the legislation for the Campaign Against Investments in South Africa, a coalition of five organizations.

The divestment campaign is also gathering momentum on colleges and universities. Harvard University announced in February that it had sold its holdings in Baker International, which produces mining and oil-drilling machinery, because the firm would not demonstrate that it follows "reasonable ethical standards in South Africa." Stanford University announced it will sell nearly \$5 million of holdings in Motorola if the firm makes any further sales of communications equipment to the South African military or police. ■

## WESTERN AFRICA

## Liberian parties refuse to be squelched

At least 10 political parties are struggling to campaign for the elections that are scheduled for later this year. To suppress their efforts, Gen. Samuel Doe is using a variety of methods ranging from detention of political leaders to long delays in granting official recognition to the parties.

Gen. Doe announced last year that elections would be held in October 1985 in preparation for a return to civilian rule in January 1986. He decreed that government officials running for president would have to step down from their positions during the campaign. Doe, however, did not step down when he announced his candidacy. And he has a handy weapon to stifle criticism in Decree 88A, which empowers security forces to detain people without bail pending a hearing.

Politicians do not appear to be intimidated so far, but are battling to keep the democratic election process alive. Recently, three political parties jointly protested the dismissal of the co-chairman of the Special Elections Commission (SECOM), who was replaced by the brother of a key member of Doe's own party. Party representatives claimed that SECOM, which was established to impartially supervise the elections, was being misused. Many Liberians claim that the commission is actually a vehicle for ensuring Doe's reelection. Among the prerequisites that SECOM imposed for party registration was the deposit of \$50,000 in cash and \$100,000 in bonds, large sums for a party to raise before it has been allowed to campaign for support.

The commission had earlier suspended the United People's Party

(UPP), led by Gabriel Baccus-Matthews. The UPP had applied to SECOM for official registration. Recently, Matthews stated publicly that SECOM had taken a whole month to review UPP's financial documents and an additional two weeks to resolve the suspension question. Matthews was a key figure in the opposition to the Tolbert regime and had been a member of Doe's cabinet.

Dr. Amos Sawyer, the leader of the Liberian People's Party (LPP), has also publicly criticized SECOM recently, warning that the question now being raised in public is "not who would be President in the Second Republic but whether a demo-

cratic process would be allowed to take its course."

Sawyer and nine other leading Liberians were arrested last August on charges of plotting to overthrow the government. After heavy international pressure, including a strong expression of concern from the U.S. congressional committee that oversees U.S. funding to Liberia, the detainees were released. Their arrest had triggered a demonstration at the University of Liberia in which many students died. Four other LPP members were detained in December on charges of "writing and circulating leaflets designed to assassinate the character of government officials and create chaos."

Doe has been dealing particularly harshly with Liberians who are connected with publications critical of his government. In December, he detained eight students suspected of ties to REACT (Revolutionary Action Committee), an opposition group that had published pamphlets attacking Doe's administration. They reportedly have been tortured in an effort to force them to "confess." When the Liberian National Students' Union protested their arrests, a student union officer was imprisoned.

In mid-January, Doe closed down the *Daily Observer*, Liberia's main independent newspaper, for placing an article quoting a labor leader higher on the page than an article quoting Doe. It was the fourth time since its founding in 1981 that the paper had been closed down, including a six-month period last year.

A group of the parties have been planning to form a coalition whose combined wealth and strength might be sufficient to defeat the incumbent. In the meantime, political activity is certain to grow even more intense in the months leading up to the election. ■

**BURKINA FASO**  
Rent goes out the window

Capt. Thomas Sankara announced in his end-of-year address that workers would not have to pay rent in 1985. The government will



Capt. Thomas Sankara

still require payment of commercial and industrial rents to the state, however, regardless of the nature and nationality of the company.

The intention of the new policy is to help direct investments away from the construction sector toward agricultural and industrial production. "We cannot understand that we remain hungry when we have fertile land to develop, while others prefer to invest 30-40 million CFA francs in houses which do not benefit the people," said Capt. Pierre Ouédraogo, national secretary-general of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. He emphasized that the rent suspension should not be construed as a "nationalization of housing," but added that those who "refuse to obey the revolutionary law will simply have their houses confiscated."

The government will establish a national housing organization to help monitor the implementation of the rent decree. The new body, to be headed by Customs Department Director Daouda Traoré, is also intended to "protect the underprivileged, particularly orphans and widows, in addition to all those who depend solely on rent for their means of subsistence." ■

**GHANA**  
Donor pledges rise

Donor nations increased their pledges at the second conference held by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to solicit aid for Ghana. Pledges at the meeting, held in Paris in December, totalled \$415 million.

Donors were inspired to continue or increase their commitments by signs of an economic recovery in Ghana. Recently, Finance and Economic Planning Secretary Kwesi Botchwey reported that the country's gross domestic product had grown by five percent last year and is expected to rise by six percent this year. Moreover, the annual rate of inflation fell from 123 percent in 1983 to an estimated 30 to 35 percent last year, Botchwey said. The assistance will help Ghana increase its imports of spare parts and equipment to restore roads, ports, and the cocoa plantations that provide over 60 percent of Ghana's export revenue.

Ghana is in the midst of a three-year economic recovery program which has included four devaluations of the cedi, the latest in early December. Since April 1983, the cedi has been devalued by more than 1,700 percent. This time it was allowed to drop from 38.5 to 50 against the dollar. In addition, the daily minimum wage was recently doubled to \$1.40 to help cushion the impact of the devaluation on workers.

Meanwhile, Ghana has told Lonhro to proceed with a 50 percent increase in gold production. The London-based conglomerate holds 49 percent of the Ashanti Goldfields Corp. Ghana is also refurbishing its harbors and injecting capital into the timber and mining industries.

In a separate development, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) has announced "structural changes" in its People's Defense Committees and Workers' Defense Committees. Both the PDCs and WDCs are now to be known as Committees for Defense of the Revolution. Explaining the changes shortly after they were in-

roduced, Flt.-Lt. Jerry Rawlings said that the revolution must be defended by everyone, and that the PNDC "is not interested in people defending their own interests. We are not interested in workers versus management confrontation," he said. In addition, the PNDC Secretariat is taking over the functions of the National Defense Committee. ■

## GUINEA

### Conté shuffles and deals

President Lansana Conté consolidated his position as head of state on December 19, announcing the first cabinet reshuffle since he seized power in April 1984. Conté said that the extent of state corruption had obliged him to abolish the post of prime minister and to take over the function of minister of defense.

Prime Minister Col. Diara Traoré was demoted to Minister of Education in the reshuffle. In addition, five of the 25 members of the ruling council were dropped and four ministers of state were appointed, each to represent one of the country's main ethnic groups. The move enabled Conté to reassert himself as the unchallenged leader of the ruling Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN), thereby ending recent rumors that control of the country was in the hands of Traoré.

Conté warned that the changes were only the beginning and that other public figures could be next in line. To further fight incompetence and corruption, Conté said he would "cut off the rotten branches, and in order to make this action fair and efficient, we will begin at the top." He accused several individuals who had been given leadership positions at the time of the coup of having "concentrated primarily on their status and sought to satisfy their personal interests."

Conté stressed that further measures would be necessary to fight corruption and implement the country's economic recovery program. In his New Year's message to the nation, Conté said individuals would be prohibited from running

## OPEC accord balances on a precipice

By the late January close of OPEC's third stormy meeting in as many months, the embattled cartel succeeded in averting near disaster but left many of its 13-member states nervous about its future.

The key development in the OPEC agreement was Nigeria's decision to raise the price of its high quality Bonny Light by 65 cents to \$28.65. It had been anticipated that Nigeria—whose oil provides 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings and 80 percent of all government revenue—would insist on lowering its price to keep pace with competitors. Under OPEC's old price structure, Nigeria was required to charge more than the official "marker" price set at \$29 a barrel for Arabian Light. But in recent months, price-cutting by Britain and Norway, both non-OPEC nations with comparable crudes, undermined this arrangement, compelling Nigeria to follow suit and lower its price by \$2 to \$28 a barrel.

To put a halt to this price war, OPEC was forced to call an emergency meeting in late December, where an interim formula was reached. However, Nigeria, along with Algeria, rejected it. The new price fixed in the January accord brought Nigeria back into the fold, and enabled the cartel to at least temporarily smooth over the divisions which have surfaced in recent months.

The long-term stability of the agreement, however, depends a great deal on Britain's willingness to cooperate and abandon its plans to move to market-related pricing. OPEC sources remain skeptical that Nigeria will be able to adhere to the accord if Britain decides to further slash its prices. Such a turn of events would shatter the accord and bring OPEC back to square one. Nigerian Minister of Petroleum Tam David-West has made clear that Nigeria's interests come first, and that his country's prices will be kept competitive with those of North Sea oil. As he put it, "Nigeria has two feet in OPEC but two eyes on the North Sea."

Although the emergency meeting succeeded in securing Nigerian agreement on a new oil price structure, three key members—Algeria, Libya, and Iran—found it unacceptable, while Gabon abstained. The accord narrowed the price gap between OPEC's top quality and inferior crudes from \$4 to \$2.40. The dissenters, producers of the more expensive light crudes, opposed the price reduction in the higher quality oil, and instead argued for an increase in the price of heavy crude as a means of reducing the differential.

Algerian Oil Minister Belkacem Nabi underscored the division within OPEC when he described the agreement as "unfair to producers of light crudes, who are losing income through forced price cuts, while the Saudis are selling their heavy crudes at official prices that are cheaper than the free market."

private operations in an effort to check "large-scale smuggling and embezzlement" in diamond mining and trading. From now on, Conté explained, these operations would be exploited by joint ventures with international companies. The Aredor consortium is the sole active diamond mining group in the country. Ownership of the consortium is shared equally between the Australian-owned Aredor Services and the Conté government.

The CMRN also decided to restore property that the regime of

former President Ahmed Sekou Touré had confiscated from its opponents. Property that had been seized legally for crimes like embezzlement and fraud, however, will not be returned. The measure, which covers some 350 houses and hundreds of plantations, will affect over 200 people—mostly heirs of political prisoners who died in the infamous Camp Boiro. Included are the heirs of former ministers Drame Alioune, Ousmane Balde, Keita Fodeba, and Diallo Telli, the first OAU secretary-general. ■

**GUINEA-BISSAU**  
Barbosa released in amnesty

The Guinea-Bissau Council of State in early January released Rafael Barbosa, one of the leaders of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) during the liberation struggle.

Barbosa, sentenced to death for treason in 1977, later had his sentence commuted to 15 years of "compulsory productive labor." Following the coup d'état of November 1980, Barbosa was freed but then rearrested. The government also announced the amnesty of former Internal Security Minister Constantino Teixeira and former Armed Forces Minister Umaru Djalo, the last two members of the deposed Luis Cabral government who were still in detention.

In a separate development, President João Bernardo Vieira revealed in his New Year's message that salaries for civil servants would increase by 20 to 30 percent, and the prices paid to agricultural producers would be raised by 60 percent. Vieira, who had substantially increased civil service salaries and producer prices last year, warned that the number of civil service employees would have to be reduced this year.

Vieira cited last year's reduction in the budget deficit which was accomplished by devaluating the peso, reducing public expenses, and reforming the commercial sector. And he appealed to citizens to fight the "corruption, laxity, laziness, underhanded dealings, disorganization, and dishonesty from which this country suffers."

**IVORY COAST**  
A belt-tightening budget

Stronger-than-ever measures are needed in 1985 to pull the economy out of the doldrums, according to Minister of Economy and Finance Abdoulaye Koné. The "particularly difficult international situation" has caused a "severe drop in revenues"—the primary reason be-

hind the restrictive 1985 budget, he told the National Assembly.

Public investment was hardest hit, slashed by 63.3 percent. No further development projects were included in the investment budget, which was reduced from \$575 million in 1984 to \$187 million. Rural development, with an emphasis on food production, remained the main priority, taking 35 percent of the investment budget.



President Houphouët-Boigny

The austerity measures, implemented under the watchful eye of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have brought about job retrenchment and significant pay cuts for the third successive year, particularly in the public sector. Under the direction of Civil Service Minister Jean Jacques Béchio, the wages of about 40,000 public workers will be cut by as much as 50 percent.

French technical advisers, known as *coopérants*, are the other major target in the government's economy drive. Last year, almost 15 percent of the operational budget was spent on 3,000 technical assistants recruited through the French Ministry of Aid and Cooperation. About one-third of these *coopérants*, mostly teachers, are to be replaced with qualified Ivorians.

Béchio recently indicated that 90 percent of the 650 privately recruited specialists, employed mainly in government administration and state-owned enterprises,

would have to leave the country by 1986. Béchio explained that "some experts think they are irreplaceable, whereas they are often little more than advisers or simple bureaucrats."

Government officials usually have shown more gratitude in public, thanking the French for their "honorable" work in assisting the country and training Ivorians. Privately, however, doubts persist concerning the extent of the "training" that has actually taken place, and whether the number of qualified Ivorians is sufficient to replace the *coopérants*. The government's economic options nonetheless remain limited, and as one Ivorian official observed, "French expertise did not stop the country (from) sinking into a financial crisis."

**NIGERIA**  
Charting its own course

Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari has introduced new austerity measures in the 1985 budget, reiterating his determination for Nigeria to follow its own economic course rather than the dictates of international financial institutions.

Despite more than a year of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over a loan of \$2.4 billion, Buhari has held out against the IMF in areas including an immediate and major devaluation of the naira and termination of subsidies on domestic oil. Without IMF intercession, he recently negotiated an unofficial agreement with a number of Nigeria's chief creditors, some of whom agreed to take six-year promissory notes for trade debts.

The military government met the goals of its first year in office, including reductions in imports, public spending, and the foreign trade deficit. Buhari said in his end-of-year budget message. Moreover, foreign exchange trafficking and oil pilfering have been checked, he added.

The 1985 economic program sets targets of a relatively modest growth of one percent in gross domestic product and a reduction in



inflation to 30 percent. (In 1984, inflation rose by 40 percent to almost double the 1983 level.) The budget sharply increases the amount to be spent on debt repayment and further reduces imports which last year were at one-third of the 1981 level. To prevent further increases in foreign debt, the budget allows no foreign borrowing; the only projects that can proceed are those covered by foreign loans already signed.

New taxes are being imposed on air tickets to destinations outside Africa and on dormant businesses that wish to reactivate. And customs duties must now be paid in advance instead of upon receipt of goods. Agriculture is a priority in the new budget, but the focus is on government agricultural schemes and large-scale mechanized farming supported by foreign private investment, rather than on small-scale farmers.

Despite the stringent budget measures, observers are not optimistic that Nigeria will be able to reform its economy without the help of the IMF. However, they are closely watching the effort, which is unusual among developing countries. If the country is successful, it could have major implications for the international system of debt repayment, and for the West's financial relations with Third World countries.

Buhari has stated that his austerity program will eventually improve the lives of Nigerians, but many are now barely able to earn enough for daily subsistence. An estimated 150,000 jobs have been wiped out, and thousands of workers have been forced to take sizeable pay cuts. Consumer goods and many foods are in short supply. Government services have been drastically curtailed. Taxes and new rules have put many small-scale traders out of business.

Even his critics agree that the economy is better managed today than it was before the military takeover. However, the hardships are likely to worsen before the economic measures begin to affect the average citizen. ■

## SENEGAL Rice price increases

In January, Finance Minister Mamadou Touré announced a 23 percent increase in the price of rice, Senegal's dietary staple.

President Abdou Diouf emphasized the high cost of importing 400,000 tons of rice a year and urged the consumption of domestic products. Touré pursued a similar theme, justifying the increase as "an economic necessity to encourage local rice production and also to help promote consumption of alternatives, such as corn and millet."

To ease the impact of the mea-

sure, the government announced a five percent increase in the monthly minimum wage and granted a small bonus to all civil servants. However, most Senegalese do not earn a fixed salary and are not affected by wage measures.

The price increase had been widely anticipated following negotiations in December with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The government and the IMF agreed on a new standby arrangement to replace the 63 million in special drawing rights (\$62.4 million) which expired in September. Negotiations had dragged on for some time because

## Plots, rivalries plague trade unionists

The fourth congress of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), held in Lagos in late January to discuss trade union movements and the plight of African workers, adjourned abruptly in disarray.

The OATUU, founded in 1973, drew some 200 delegates from more than 40 African countries, and observers from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the International Labor Organization, and the World Federation of Trade Unions to discuss unemployment, workers' living standards, and violations of trade union rights.

Even before it opened, the congress was shrouded in controversy. Reports were circulating in African capitals that the CIA was plotting to gain control of the OATUU. A week before the congress, Secretary-General Denis Akumu revealed that the CIA was involved in an "organized campaign" to oust the top leadership, including himself and OATUU President Ali Nefishi of Libya.

A secret document from London, released to African trade unionists and journalists, claimed that the CIA had launched a \$1.4 million "operation Africa" to sabotage the OATUU. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi dismissed these accusations as "fabrication and disinformation."

The *New Nigerian* argued that the U.S. was concerned about the OATUU's stand against apartheid and its demand that the U.S. and South Africa stop subversive activities aimed at destabilizing the frontline states. The CIA's strategy, it claimed, was to replace certain OATUU officials with more "favorable" leaders through the influence of the pro-Western ICFTU.

In a longer-standing dispute, the Moroccan delegation to the meeting walked out to protest the presence of delegates from the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Moroccan trade unionists were assured that SADR delegates had only been granted observer status. But then Morocco insisted on joining the credentials committee, which determines voting eligibility, thereby hoping to frustrate possible Algerian efforts to promote SADR membership. Finally, the OATUU withdrew SADR's invitation, and Morocco resigned itself to observer status on the committee.

Allegations of financial irregularities by OATUU delegates also disrupted the congress. As Chairman Alhaji Ali Chiroma put it, the auditor's accounts "raised several unanswered questions." To probe embezzlement within the organization, a panel was established to investigate the accounts. The present executive will be supervised by a caretaker committee until an emergency congress, to be convened within a year, elects a new executive.

of IMF pressure for more market-oriented prices on basic foods. In January, the IMF revealed it had approved a \$77 million loan over 18 months to support measures to help the country improve its fiscal and payments balances.

At a World Bank donors conference on Senegal, nine countries and 14 multilateral institutions promised about \$500 million in foreign assistance in 1985. While the government's economic policies were endorsed as "a sound basis for restoring financial stability and economic growth," delegates stressed the "need for further efforts to cut back spending and imports, and to increase domestic savings." ■

**SIERRA LEONE**  
Presidential elections likely

The search for a successor to President Siaka Stevens is underway, although he has not definitely said that he will not run for reelection. Stevens' seven-year term under the country's one-party constitution will expire in June, at which time elections will probably be held.

Elections for seven vacant parliamentary seats were scheduled for February, and in April, the ruling All People's Congress party will hold a national delegates conference to select a presidential candidate, after receiving recommendations from party branches.

The President, who will turn 80 this year, has repeatedly said that he would like to retire. He has ruled the country for 17 years. Some observers predict that he will indeed step down this year, but others note that his frequent cabinet reshuffles have seemed designed to prevent a successor from emerging. Two possible candidates—First Vice President Sorie Ibrahim Koroma and Second Vice President Christian Kamara-Taylor—are said to be in poor health.

In his recently published autobiography, Stevens said "The time has come when a younger man, possibly one with a different approach to the problems of our country, should have the opportunity of implementing his ideas and learning

from the experience of leadership as I have done."

Criticism of the Stevens' government focuses on the deteriorating economy, pervasive corruption, and widespread smuggling of gold and diamonds. The president's opponents have also criticized him for allowing two African-Lebanese financiers to gain a large share of the country's newly-created diamond company. One of them, Jamil Said Mohammad, is said to dominate the economy and to exert a strong influence on the President as well.

The new firm, Precious Minerals Marketing Company (PMMC), has bought out British Petroleum's (BP) 49 percent stake in the National Diamond Mining Company. Jamil holds 15 percent of the company, and another Lebanese millionaire, Tony Yazbeck, holds a similar share. The remaining shares are split between the government and private companies and individuals. The PMMC will sell diamonds directly to Europe, bypassing the central bank. ■

**TOGO**  
Moves towards privatization

Marking the first stage of its plan to privatize all state-run enterprises, the government of President Gnassingbé Eyadema announced late last year that it had taken the unusual step of leasing its national

steel company to a private American investor. This pact is expected to set an important precedent for similar ventures by other African countries seeking to encourage a shift away from state ownership.

Acting Minister of Plan and Industry Koffi Walla and Minister of State Corporations Koffi Djondo signed several agreements with Société Togolaise de Sidérurgie (STS), a newly-formed company established by an American businessman. In line with this new deal, the government has leased the formerly unprofitable steel-mill facilities located near Lomé to STS for a 10-year period. In turn, STS will be required to pay the government a fixed minimum fee or a percentage of its profits, whichever sum is greater.

The new company will be fully taxed at normal rates. However, it will be exempted from import and export duties, and awarded a 41 percent tariff protection against imports that compete with domestic products. Though STS is owned solely by foreign investors, it expects to make 30 percent of its shares available to Togolese interests within the next few years. The company, which is to restructure the steel facilities on a more profitable basis, eventually intends to expand beyond the domestic market and to develop an export trade with neighboring countries. ■

**EASTERN AFRICA**

*Exodus from Ethiopia continues, as food fails to reach war-torn provinces*

The steady stream of refugees flowing from Ethiopia into Sudan underscores the failure of international relief efforts to reach many of the 2 million famine victims in the northern provinces. The UN recently protested to Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam that famine relief was not reaching the rebel-held areas and requested that the Red Cross be allowed to transport food to the north. Mengistu refused

the request and said that the government would send food convoys with armed escorts instead.

Meanwhile, an estimated 3,000 Ethiopians per day are heading west for the border instead of east to feeding centers. Some have reported that they are mistreated and denied food at the government centers when they say they are from rebel-held areas. Others may hold the ill-founded hope that they will

find better conditions in Sudan. (Late in January, doctors were reporting that cholera had broken out in some feeding centers, though the Ethiopian government maintained that the epidemic was merely acute diarrhea and vomiting.)

Estimates of the number of Ethiopians who have followed the refugee trails in recent months range up to 200,000. Sudan's refugee population was already at least one million. Epidemics of malaria, dysentery, typhoid, and measles sweep through the camps. Adequate food and even minimal shelter materials are not available to the majority of the refugees. And refugee camp management is an organizational nightmare, since there is no central coordination for the dozens of aid groups attempting to offer assistance to the refugees. Sudan has traditionally welcomed refugees from Ethiopia and other nations including Uganda, Chad, and Zaire. Its law on the right of asylum is considered a model in Africa. But while Sudan normally has a food surplus, it is now in the throes of serious drought after four years of sub-normal rainfall. An estimated 4.5 million of its own people are suffering from acute shortages of sorghum, millet, and wheat.

The majority of the Ethiopian refugees come from the provinces of Tigré and Eritrea. Many of them have escaped starvation, however, because the Tigré People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the guerrilla forces that claim to hold 85 percent of the countryside in their respective provinces, have been operating their own relief services. They send convoys of trucks with food and medicine from Sudan into Tigré and Eritrea by night, protected by guerrillas. The food is donated to the rebel forces by sympathetic Western governments. When the trucks return to Sudan, they carry refugees who are too old, too young, too sick, or simply too exhausted to walk any farther.

The rebel relief services also receive funds with which they purchase contraband food aid. The Ethiopian government pays its armed forces in food, which the sol-

diers sell to Sudanese merchants, who in turn sell it to the relief services. The EPLF and TPLF have indicated that they would be unable to terminate this illegal operation so they cooperate in order to maintain and control the flow of food into the area.

### The Resettlement Program

Some of the refugees are said to be leaving Ethiopia in an effort to escape the government's program to resettle famine victims from Tigré, Gondar, and northern Wallo to the southwestern provinces of Illubabor, Kefa, and Gamo-Gofa. The Mengistu regime asserts that people are not being taken against their will, and families in the resettlement camps have affirmed that they were not forced to make the move. Some allegations have been made, however, that inhabitants of Tigré have been forced onto trucks to be taken south.



*Ethiopian refugee in Sudan*

Each family reportedly receives five acres of land as well as farming equipment, shelter, seed, and food to last until the next harvest. The government claims the people will be producing their own food within a year, though some experts predict that shipments of food will be needed for at least five years. Many of the donor nations have remained neutral about the plan, but the U.S. government has been openly critical. One of the major problems is a lack of preparation for the massive resettlement, which is supposed to

move 1.5 million people and has already resettled more than 120,000. People who have lived in the northern highland areas for generations will be particularly susceptible to malaria and other diseases that are prevalent in the warmer, wetter southeastern region. In addition, the program will dilute the famine relief effort, which already suffers from shortages of trucks and other resources.

The harshest criticisms of the program come from the Eritrean and Tigréan liberation fronts which maintain that the Mengistu regime is attempting to depopulate the northern provinces in order to deprive the guerrillas of support. They also say that the government is deliberately withholding food from inhabitants of northern areas to force them to participate in the program. That the resettlement areas are not densely populated nor stricken by drought, however, is reason enough for many to find some hope in the plan. ■

### COMOROS

#### Prime minister post scrapped

The Comoran parliament recently passed several controversial amendments to the 1978 constitution which strengthened the position of President Ahmed Abdallah and downgraded two of his potential successors.

The office of prime minister, which had been held by Ali Mroudjae, was abolished, and its functions taken over by the president. Mroudjae had been appointed to the post by Abdallah in February 1982, and reappointed in October 1984, following Abdallah's re-election to a six-year term.

In line with these constitutional changes, Abdallah formed a new government in mid-January, with a reduced cabinet of only four ministers of state. Mroudjae was given the rather lengthy title of Minister of State for Internal and Social Affairs, Justice, Labor, Employment, Vocational Training, Information, Culture, Youth and Sports.

The other principal modification to the Comoran constitution altered

the process for replacing the president in the event of death or incapacitation. Previously the chairman of the federal assembly—a post held by Mohamed Taki, one of Abdallah's main rivals—had been constitutionally designated to take over as interim president. Under the amended article, the president of the supreme court will now become the head of state if the president can no longer effectively carry out his duties.

### Mayotte referendum rescheduled

A referendum will be held in Mayotte within a few months, French presidential adviser on African affairs, Guy Penne, announced during a visit to Mayotte at the end of January. Penne said the exact date of the referendum would be fixed during the next session of the French Parliament.

The referendum to determine the exact status of Mayotte had been scheduled for December 22, but was postponed by the French government. Abdallah has pushed to incorporate Mayotte into the three islands of the Federal Republic of the Comoros, whose territorial integrity, he contends, cannot be complete without it. The 55,000 Mahorais, however, have always been strongly opposed to the proposed integration, and have insisted that their links with France should be maintained. ■

## KENYA

### Party elections to be set

Preparations are underway for national elections for the Kenya African National Union (Kanu), the country's sole political party. The date will be set by the end of March, following a two-month drive for new party members.

National party elections were last held in 1978. Kanu's constitution calls for elections to be held every two years, but they have been postponed for a variety of reasons.

President Daniel arap Moi has taken steps that have consolidated his power through Kanu. All civil servants were required to join



President Daniel arap Moi

the party by the first of the year and pay an annual membership fee. Several months earlier, 15 party members, including former Minister of Constitutional Affairs Charles Njonjo, and those with ties to him, were expelled from the party.

The President's decision to pardon Njonjo—although an official commission of inquiry found him guilty of all but two of a large number of allegations—is designed to lay the case to rest and avoid an appeal that could implicate others in Moi's administration. The pardon, announced on December 12, the 21st anniversary of Kenya's independence, came several months after the commission's announcement that Njonjo was guilty of complicity in both the coup attempt in the Seychelles in November 1981 and the effort to topple the Moi government in August 1982. He was also found guilty of illegal importation of guns, secret dealings with South African officials, theft of money from the Association of the Physically Disabled of Kenya, general abuse of power, and other crimes.

Moi said that he took into consideration Njonjo's faithful service to the country up until 1980 "when he started entertaining misguided political ambitions." Along with the pardon, Moi announced the release of some 5,000 prisoners, mostly those convicted of minor offenses, and four political detainees who had been arrested in 1982 following the

coup attempt. They are politicians George Anyona and Koigi wa Wamwere and university lecturers Edward Oyugi and Kamonji Wachira. After his release, Wamwere criticized Kenya's detention laws, complaining that throughout his entire three years of detention, he was never told why he was detained without trial. Other political prisoners are still being held, including Raila Odinga, son of former Vice President Oginga Odinga.

Meanwhile, power struggles are intensifying in some key districts prior to the elections. The Kanu executive committee suspended 10 members of the South Nyanza branch of the party after they called for the suspension of the Kanu branch chairman in their district. And in Machakos district, a group of Kanu officials called for the replacement of Paul Negei, their branch chairman who is also minister for the environment and natural resources, with Mulu Mutisya, a nominated member of Parliament. ■

## MADAGASCAR

### Kung fu gang goes berserk

A brutal kung fu attack in late 1984 by a gang of youths reportedly opposed to President Didier Ratsiraka left over 50 people dead and numerous others injured. The gang went on a rampage in the capital city of Antananarivo, massacring many of its victims bare-handed.

Kung fu, which has gained tremendous popularity in Madagascar in recent years, has been widely used by groups opposed to Ratsiraka's Arema party to train activists and recruit new members. The government banned kung fu in early September, fearing that such martial arts activities were getting out of control.

The ban enraged many of the island's kung fu practitioners, leading to the bloody attack in December against the headquarters of the government-organized youth movement known as TTS. The TTS does most of its recruiting among the island's poor, seeking to reintegrate dropouts into society. On occasion, it has been known to resort to

strong-arm and bully tactics to drum up support for the government, making it a natural target of discontented kung fu groups.

Following the slaughter, Ratsiraka purged the top officers in the army and the security forces for failing to control the violence. He appointed a new chief of the general staff of the People's Armed Forces and a new gendarmerie commander-in-chief.

**Aid for cyclone relief**

The World Bank's International Development Agency (IDA) announced in mid-January that Madagascar would be given a credit of 40.2 million (\$40 million) in special drawing rights to import raw materials and equipment to improve industrial capacity and efficiency. This follows a recent \$15 million loan from the IDA to help Madagascar recover from a devastating cyclone.

The tropical cyclone Kamisy ravaged northern Madagascar last April, effectively crippling the two main ports of Mahjanaga and Antsiranana. It also caused widespread damage to agricultural regions, highways, and airports. Though cyclones occur annually in Madagascar, the country had not been hit as severely in many years.

The credit from IDA, the soft loan branch of the World Bank, will help restore damaged property and minimize the effects of future cyclones. ■

**SEYCHELLES**  
**Amnesty for Hoare**

"Mad Mike" Hoare, the famed mercenary who built his reputation in the Congo in the mid-1960s, is to be released from a South African jail upon completion of a quarter of his 10-year prison term in March. The 65-year-old Hoare was jailed for hijacking an Air India plane to South Africa after leading an abortive coup attempt in the Seychelles in November 1981. South African authorities announced that he would be released along with 43 other prisoners as part of a Christmas amnesty.

Hoare and his gang of mercenaries were forced to flee from the Seychelles after having been discovered at the airport. They had hoped to overthrow President Albert René in a coup designed to return former leader James Mancham to power. More than 40 mercenaries received sentences ranging from six months to five years. Most have already been released. ■

**SOMALIA**  
**Landing rights negotiated**

South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha visited Mogadishu in late December to negotiate landing and overflight rights for South African Airways.

Upon his return to South Africa, Botha said that he had spoken with Somali government officials about trade, commerce, health services, and a variety of other matters—one of which was apparently landing rights. South Africa also allegedly will obtain berthing facilities at the port of Kismayu on the Indian Ocean. In exchange, Somalia is said to be receiving military training and equipment from South Africa.

The Somali Ministry of Information has repeatedly denied that Somalia concluded any kind of pact with South Africa.

Despite Organization of African Unity (OAU) sanctions against Pretoria's air traffic, a number of African countries—Cape Verde, Comoros, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and possibly Ivory Coast—grant the airline landing rights.

In the past, Kenya too had allowed landing rights to South Africa but cancelled them when relations between the two countries became strained over charges that South African agents were secretly collaborating with ousted Kenyan cabinet minister Charles Njonjo. The Kenya stop had been an important link for flights to the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

The alleged Somali-South African agreement has drawn sharp criticism in Africa. The Ethiopian government called it a stab in the back for the Organization of African



*President Siad Barre*

Camerapix

Unity (OAU), as well as for the UN and nonwhites in South Africa. OAU spokesmen indicated that they would inquire into the reported agreement.

The Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia, one of the groups opposing the regime of President Siad Barre, called the airways accord a "horrible and treacherous agreement" which could lead to the use of Somali airports by South African military aircraft against neighboring countries in the Horn. The Somali National Movement (SNM), another opposition force, condemned the Botha visit to Mogadishu, charging that South Africa had committed military training and weapons to the Somali government in exchange for the landing rights agreement.

It has also been reported in South Africa that Comoros Airways, in close cooperation with South Africa, would soon initiate a direct air link between South Africa and Saudi Arabia, with stops in Johannesburg, Moroni, and Mogadishu. ■

**TANZANIA**  
**Nyerere's successor sought**

Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Tanzania's ruling party, will begin the process of selecting a successor to President Julius Nyerere at a meeting of its executive committee in July. Nyerere recently reaffirmed his decision to step down at the end of this year, although he will serve out the remaining two years as chairman of CCM.

Those currently under consideration for succession to the presidency include Prime Minister Salim Ahmed Salim, former Prime Minister and Defense Minister Rashidi Kawawa, and President of Zanzibar Ali Hassan Mwinyi. Other candidates may emerge, however. Nyerere has so far not indicated his preference, but when he does, it is expected to have a major influence on the party's choice.

Speculation on Tanzania's future revolves around not only a replacement for Nyerere, but also possible changes in the nation's economic policies. Nyerere is widely respected internationally for the strides Tanzania has made under his leadership in education and national unity. The adult literacy rate, at 70 percent, is the highest in Africa.

However, he is also widely criticized, especially in Western diplomatic circles, for refusing to accept the mandates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and for "clinging" to socialist policies that have not succeeded in reviving the economy. Most Western donors, except for the Scandinavian states, have cut or threatened to cut their aid to Tanzania unless Nyerere settles with the IMF. The U.S. has terminated all of its development aid to the country, with the exception of emergency food relief.

The steps that Tanzania has taken to conform with IMF dictates have had some short-term negative effects. The substantial devaluation of the Tanzanian shilling has caused a sharp drop in the standard of living, and partly because of producer price increases, Tanzanians now have more money than there are goods to buy in the marketplace.

Nyerere continues to criticize IMF policies toward developing countries. He recently proposed that creditor and debtor nations should all meet together to discuss the problems that face both sides. The current practice is unfair, he said, because it forces the individual debtor nation to face all creditor nations. In an interview that appeared in the January *New African*, Nyerere noted that the rich countries of the world "have discovered

that the IMF is a very good instrument for controlling the economies of the Third World," and he forecast that one day "it will dawn on the poor countries that an instrument like the IMF has become the substitute for a colonial empire." ■

## UGANDA Army battles guerrillas

A government offensive against guerrillas in the Luwero triangle intensified in January, as both sides claimed victories in the four-year-old struggle. The government announced that hundreds of guerrillas were fleeing the district.

Meanwhile, the National Resistance Army (NRA), led by former defense minister, Yoweri Museveni, overtook an army barracks west of Kampala, seizing arms and ammunition. The NRA, based in the Luwero triangle northeast of Kampala, is fighting to overthrow the regime of President Milton Obote, which it claims took power illegally by rigging the 1980 elections.

As part of the offensive against the guerrillas, the government recently brought in nearly 1,000 North Korean troops to train the Ugandan army. Obote maintains that the Koreans are not used in actual combat. Tanzanian troops are

reportedly also aiding the army.

Ugandan army abuses and indiscriminate killings in the Luwero triangle have been reported repeatedly in recent months. Much of the region has been turned into "a desolate wasteland, and its remaining inhabitants allegedly into 'zombies' by the army's excesses," according to a report published in late December by the Minority Rights Group, a London-based international research organization. Last August, the U.S. government charged that the Ugandan government has been responsible for the deaths of from 100,000 to 200,000 persons in that region. The Ugandan government has denied these charges.

The Minority Rights Group reports on excessive Ugandan army reprisals not only against the Luwero triangle population but also against a number of other ethnic groups that are regarded as anti-government. The use of the army to suppress opposition has forced more than a quarter of a million Ugandans into exile as "official refugees," and has been responsible for the internal displacement of an additional 800,000 people from their homes, the report says, adding that there were fewer than 10,000 official Ugandan refugees in 1978, the last full year of Idi Amin's dictatorship.

## Army worms attack Kenyan crops

Army worms invaded eastern and southern Africa in December, devastating crops that authorities had hoped would ease severe food shortages. Kenya was hit hardest by the "Green March," as the Kenyan press dubbed the infestation of worms. Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe were also afflicted by the worms, which in moth form can travel more than 600 miles in one flight.

Kenya initially had no stocks of the appropriate pesticide, but Britain, West Germany, and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization donated supplies used to fight the invasion.

The attack was particularly ill-timed for Kenya, which was hard hit by drought during most of 1984. The short rains in October had allowed farmers to plant, but then the worms destroyed more than 7,000 acres of newly seeded crops and pastures. The full extent of the damage is not yet determined.

Not everyone is dismayed by the invasion of the worms, however. The Kenyan High Commissioner in Zambia received a request from a Zambian citizen who wanted to import the worms. In Zambia, they are an edible delicacy, sold for high prices in the marketplace.

**Elections planned**

Obote has stated that he is planning to proceed with the general elections scheduled for December 1985. An effort to gain support in the Buganda region, where the Democratic Party took all but one seat in 1980, will undoubtedly be a key goal in his election campaign.

Vice President Paulo Muwanga's visit to the Kireka Army Barracks near Kampala, during which he personally secured the release of a number of persons being held illegally, has been viewed as an opening move in the effort to gain support among the Baganda. Opposition parties and the press praised the move and urged that other political prisoners also be released. ■

tween the two countries.

The treaty aims to attract investors to Cameroon by offering the U.S. "most favored nation" status. It provides guarantees for American investments and establishes a code for the transfer of capital and profits and the settlement of disputes. By providing greater security for investors, the agreement is intended to strengthen economic cooperation, and ultimately encourage investments in both countries.

To bolster his popularity in the run-up to the fifth congress of the ruling Cameroon National Union (UNC) at Bamenda in February, President Paul Biya toured the country. He made a special effort to reassure Cameroonians throughout his tour that the country is now calm and stable following the attempted coup of April 1984. He gave similar assurances to foreign investors.

Biya's government has struggled to attract foreign capital since the coup. Many investors have held back, waiting for a more favorable political climate. The pact with the United States suggests that Biya's determined marketing campaign abroad is paying dividends, and it should give a boost to Biya's political standing at home. ■

**CENTRAL AFRICA**

*Mobutu cleans house in party, military*

When President Mobutu Sese Seko was sworn in for a third term of office in early December, he promised to "put some order where it is needed."

He started the new year with a reorganization of the public and territorial administration. Earlier, he had publicized his intention to "wage war" against the accumulation of posts by senior officials, a practice that he said undermines discipline and unity within the ruling Popular Movement for the Revolution (MPR). Officially the move is supposed to eliminate potential conflicts of interest and prevent officials from dissipating their energies while attempting to fill two jobs. Critics maintain that Mobutu's real purpose is to promote a loyal new generation of top-level officials.

The first to be affected were Ambassadors Tshabwabwa Ashila Pashi (Belgium) and Inonga Lokongo L'Ome (United Nations) who were relieved of their posts, together with the Governor of Kinshasa, Kabaidi Wa Kabaidi. All three remain MPR central committee members. Three other governors, including Mandungu Bula Nyati of Shaba Province, were dismissed as part of the "restructuring of the territorial administration."

Next, in a major shake-up of the MPR central committee, Mobutu reduced the number of members from 125 to 80. He followed by restructuring the government's executive council so that no member of the new cabinet could remain on the central committee.

Mobutu, who is also Marshal of the Zaire Armed Forces (FAZ), then turned his attention to reorganizing the military. In mid-November, the army had squelched what was officially described as a "foreign-backed invasion" of Shaba province. Opposition sources, however, claimed that the rebellion had originated from within local army units.

Whatever the truth of these allegations, Mobutu set out to consolidate his position in the army by issuing a presidential decree on January 8 which forced six generals, nine brigadier-colonels, and five lieutenant-colonels into retirement. They were replaced by younger officers.

Perhaps of greatest long-term significance was Mobutu's decision to create a new army unit, the Inspectorate General of the FAZ. Led by General Singa Boyenge Masambay, who was hand-picked by Mobutu, the Inspectorate General is to keep the president "informed at all times of the prevailing situation in the FAZ." With the existence of such a unit, Mobutu evidently hopes to be able to maintain a closer watch over the army rank and file and thwart any future dissident activity within the armed forces. ■

**CAMEROON**  
In search of foreign investment

Cameroon's U.S. Ambassador, Paul Pondi, and U.S. State Department officials recently negotiated a bilateral investment treaty which is viewed as an important cornerstone for building economic relations be-

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**  
Political prisoners released

General André Kolingba recently announced a New Year's amnesty for 53 political prisoners. Most had been detained for allegedly failing to comply with the ban on political parties imposed by Kolingba's military regime in the aftermath of the September 1981 coup.

Those freed included Abel Goumba, the president of the Oubangui Patriotic Front Workers Party and former rector of Bangui University; Henri Maïdou, the leader of the Republican Party for Progress; and Tandalet Hozzi Hokino, president of the Central African Socialist Party. Other detainees who were involved in the unsuccessful coup attempt of March 1982 had their sentences reduced under the government decree.

The amnesty came on the heels of French President François Mitter-

rand's visit to the Central African Republic two weeks earlier. Mitterrand had pressured Kolingba to ease the government clampdown on political opposition, which has become a source of considerable diplomatic embarrassment to Paris. Kolingba's repressive measures have jeopardized the stability of the country, posing a threat to French policy in central Africa.

The Central African Republic has served as the main base for the French rapid action force which has been heavily involved in neighboring Chad. At least 1,300 French troops are on stand-by in the northwest base of Bouar and the capital city of Bangui. Overall, France has about 2,500 troops stationed in the country, backed by an impressive array of military air power. As Mitterrand emphasized during his brief visit, the Central African Republic occupies "an irreplaceable geographic and strategic position" in Africa, and France will therefore continue to fulfill its commitments to the territory, particularly "with respect to security." ■

## CONGO

### Shipping pact may be precedent

President Denis Sassou-Nguesso is embarking on an unusual cooperative venture with Scadoa, a shipping line operated by Norwegian shipowners. The initiative could set a pattern for cooperation between Third World nations and the European shipping groups that serve them.

The three-year arrangement will allow Scadoa to carry Congo's European imports and exports. In return, Congo will receive about \$2.3 million in cash as well as training for Congolese staff in preparation for the establishment of a Congolese shipping company. The new company may simply carry out administrative tasks, continuing the present arrangement with Scadoa, or it may invest in a ship that would become part of the Scadoa line.

This venture is part of a growing flexibility in the government's investment program and a gradual relaxation of the hardline Marxist pol-

## Chad controversy dominates summit

The Central African Economic and Customs Union (UDEAC) celebrated its 20th anniversary in Brazzaville in mid-December with Chad's return to the organization after a 16-year absence. Although President Hissène Habré signed the agreement making Chad the sixth member country, he pointed out that the grievances which led to its exit in 1968 have not yet been entirely resolved. In a demonstration of "political goodwill," however, he suggested that Chad would be willing to resolve its differences from within UDEAC.

Chad and the Central African Republic had left UDEAC because landlocked members, they claimed, were getting a raw deal. While a major UDEAC function is to plan new industrial development in the common interests of member states, Chad argued that profit motives were dominating the organization. Foreign investors were favoring the coastal rather than the landlocked nations.

At the summit, Chad once again expressed misgivings about having to bear the financial burden of exporting its merchandise overland to the ports of other member states. Habré pushed for an agreement to increase UDEAC solidarity fund assets, which could provide compensation to landlocked countries. Although he was unable to gain the required support for this proposal, he was promised that the grievances of Chad and the Central African Republic would be closely examined at a later date.

There were important political implications in Chad's reintegration into UDEAC. There were also moments of suspense. Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the summit host, had in the past shown a clear preference for Habré's rival, Goukouni Oueddei, rebel leader of the Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT). That Chad was able to return to the fold with Sassou-Nguesso's tacit approval gave Habré an important diplomatic boost.

Goukouni's supporters in Brazzaville, however, tried to take advantage of UDEAC developments by circulating rumors that Habré had been overthrown in a coup d'état in the Chadian capital of Ndjamena. The heads of state interrupted the summit to contact sources in Paris, putting to rest unfounded speculation over the fate of the Chadian leader.

icies that were adopted when Sassou-Nguesso became head of state in 1979. In the past few years, he has been seeking to strengthen his relations with the West. Only recently, he rejected a Soviet request to establish a naval base at Pointe Noire.

The Congolese president is also seeking support for an immense paper mill that would produce bleached hardwood pulp from a eucalyptus plantation, part of plans to develop the country's timber industry. World demand for hardwood pulp is expected to increase in the next two decades. ■

## ZAMBIA

### Austerity drive launched

Increases in agricultural production and exports are the key feature of President Kenneth Kaunda's *Ec-*

*onomic Crusade '85*, a recently announced package of austerity measures. The measures are aimed at stimulating the Zambian economy, which is staggering under the effects of the extended drought and the slowdown in shipments and sales of copper, which brings in 95 percent of the country's export earnings. The resulting lack of foreign exchange has led to recurring shortages of raw materials and spare parts as well as consumer goods.

The austerity measures include the cancellation of all imports of new passenger cars for the government, 20 percent reductions in the importation of wheat and crude vegetable oil, and a temporary ban on all new development projects except those with considerable benefits for the country's foreign exchange position.



Because Zambia's copper reserves are expected to be exhausted within the next 15 to 20 years, Zambian officials generally promote agriculture as the country's primary hope. Major changes in agricultural policy were implemented last year with the removal of government subsidies from most foods except for maize. Heavy food subsidies have been part of Kaunda's policy throughout the two decades since independence. The elimination of the subsidies has been good news for the farmers who have benefited from sharp increases in producer prices but bad news for city dwellers who have had to contend with drastic food price increases.

One area in which the country hopes to excel within a few years is rice production. A rice breeding scheme has been established at Kafue, south of Lusaka, where a team of North Korean experts are conducting research to find the best rice

variety. The scheme is intended to be a model for other projects and to eventually help reduce the country's reliance on maize, which is less resistant to drought. Wheat and coffee production schemes are also underway.

Despite the recent focus on agricultural reform, the country is still working on improvements in the copper industry. The most recent development is the construction of a \$250 million plant to extract ore from waste material that still contains enough copper to be economically profitable.

The austerity measures were negotiated in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In return, Zambia will receive an IMF loan amounting to SDR 225 million for the period ending April 1986. Kaunda has already decontrolled prices, lowered taxes, and conformed to other IMF directives. ■

cel final exams in June if student unrest continues.

In recent months, tensions have also risen between the Bourguiba government and the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), the influential trade union movement led by Habib Achour. Public sector employees have gone on a series of strikes to support higher wages and to protest the government's decision to enlarge the private sector. Miners and other workers have participated in numerous stoppages to express their disgust with government policies.

At the UGTT's 16th congress in late December, during which Achour was elected overwhelmingly to the post of general secretary, the government was repeatedly criticized for displaying "poor economic judgment." The congress fell short, however, of endorsing a full-fledged political program, which had been in the works, and rejected the proposal to create a Tunisian labor party. While the UGTT's attitude towards the government has noticeably hardened, the union was careful to keep the door open for possible future negotiations. ■

**NORTHERN AFRICA**

*Students, workers protest in Tunisia*

Students and workers have recently expressed their dissatisfaction with Tunisian government policies in a spate of public protest. Workers in different sectors of the economy have gone on a series of strikes to protest rising unemployment and falling living standards. And student disturbances at the University of Tunis have plagued the Bourguiba government since mid-December when many students boycotted classes to express dissatisfaction with the format of examinations. In addition, Islamic and leftist students clashed over the future of the university's student body organization.

The confrontation intensified in late December when 150 leftist students took part in what they termed a "peoples' tribunal," as they blindfolded, tied up, and interrogated a science faculty student, Mohamed Ali Al Achaoui, suspected of being an informer for the ruling Socialist Destour Party (PSD). Only the intervention of a group of university professors saved him from

being lynched. On several occasions, professors were harassed and forced to produce identity cards by students wearing hooded masks. On December 29, the dean of the faculty of science was forcibly held in his office for several hours.

Tensions mounted further on January 3 when more than 1,200 students called for a boycott of all classes and organized a meeting in memory of the "martyrs" of last year's "bread riots." Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali's announcement that the price of bread was to double had sparked those protests, which left more than 80 dead and some 900 wounded following the intervention of the army.

Although the university meeting was not marked by violence, physical intimidation escalated to such a degree that within a few days professors at the faculty of law, economics, and political science decided to suspend all classes. Further incidents forced the faculty to temporarily shut down. University authorities have threatened to can-

**EGYPT**

*Increase sought in US aid*

President Hosni Mubarak is seeking a major increase in U.S. military and economic aid to Egypt, a request that will be at the top of the agenda when he meets with President Reagan in March. An additional sum of nearly \$1 billion is being sought for the 1986 fiscal year, which would bring total U.S. aid to Egypt to \$3.15 billion.

Mubarak maintains that Egypt needs the aid to offset serious declines in other revenue sources. From \$6 to \$10 billion a year flows into the country from Egyptians who work abroad, primarily in other Arab states. However, the world oil surplus has cut into the economies of those countries, threatening this key source of Egyptian income. The oil glut is also damaging to Egypt's oil industry.

Mubarak is hoping to diminish

the size of his government's growing debt by cutting subsidies on food and other commodities that have kept prices artificially low. Egypt has long provided heavy subsidies, which were estimated to cost more than \$7 billion in the 1984 fiscal year, for a wide variety of items, including bread, cooking oil, sugar, and fuel. Last year Mubarak increased the prices of some foods, and he is gradually raising the price of bread.

In addition, Mubarak recently introduced a floating exchange rate for the Egyptian pound, designed to combat black market currency exchanges and to ease the serious shortage of foreign exchange, caused partly by illegal trading. ■

## SUDAN

### War spreads in south

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which is fighting to overthrow President Gaafar al-Nimeiry and gain more autonomy for the south, has continued to expand its guerrilla war and has reportedly strengthened its forces with aircraft for the first time.

Moving into eastern Equatoria Province, the guerrillas, who are led by John Garang, cut important road links to Juba, the main city of the southern region. During the latter part of January, various Western governments, including the U.S., Britain, and Norway, evacuated their aid personnel from the region.

The warfare in the south has continued to disrupt the oil production that the country so desperately needs to save its failing economy. Sudan's foreign debt is among the highest in Africa, and its foreign exchange deposits are virtually depleted. Chances of an economic revival in the near future are poor, however, as the SPLA has repeated warnings to Chevron that "resumption of the oil operations will be confronted with relentless force."

Nimeiry's effort to revive the oil industry through negotiations with the rebel forces met with failure. On New Year's Eve, the 29th anniversary of independence, he announced a new appeal to the south-

ern forces to enter into discussions with the government. He pled for reconciliation, offering Garang the post of vice-president of Sudan and coordinator of economic development in the south. But Garang refused to consider the offer, describing it as "ridiculous."

Nimeiry is also facing intense pressures from the drought and famine and the steadily growing influx of refugees.

In addition, the U.S. recently said it has temporarily frozen economic support fund payments to Sudan in an effort to exert pressure on the government to implement economic reform measures. Food and military assistance will continue, however, officials said. Other Western donors are also holding back on disbursing assistance to the country because of its economic crisis. ■

## WESTERN SAHARA

### New 'Green March' planned

Shortly after a series of heavy battles between Moroccan and Polisario forces in mid-January, King Hassan announced that he would mark the anniversary of his accession to the throne with a new "Green March" into the Western Sahara.

The event, scheduled for March 3, is expected to draw participation

from all over Morocco. The king said he would visit El Ayoun, Morocco's showcase city in the Western Sahara. This, he said, would provide further "proof to the international community of the authentic and irreversible Moroccan nature of the Sahara."

The original Green March took place in 1975 when the king led 300,000 Moroccans to the Western Sahara border to demonstrate popular support for his position regarding Morocco's claim to the territory.

After the mid-January fighting, the Moroccan Information Ministry confirmed that it had lost an F-1 fighter bomber, and Polisario said it had shot down an additional two Moroccan F-1s near Dakhla on the southwest coast of the Western Sahara. There were also reports of dozens of fatalities on both sides.

The war has recently heightened tensions between Morocco and Algeria. Morocco claimed that the guns that shot down its bomber had been fired from "neighboring territory," meaning Algeria. The conflict over the Western Sahara is also blocking efforts to convene a Maghreb summit. Algeria insists that the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), Polisario's self-proclaimed government, must participate, while Morocco refuses to take part if the SADR is included. ■

## SOUTH AFRICA

### UDF leaders charged with treason

In a major political crackdown, South African police have arrested most of the leaders of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the country's leading opposition alliance. Thousands of files were seized from UDF offices and homes in early morning raids on February 19 in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban.

Six of the 13 leaders who have been detained face charges of high treason, as do eight UDF leaders previously imprisoned, including those who took refuge in the British consulate in Durban last year.

The UDF was behind the successful boycott of elections held last

August for the new Indian and Coloured chambers of parliament. South African government officials claim that the organization is a "front" for the banned ANC. The UDF has become the most effective legal vehicle for opposition to the apartheid regime.

Among those arrested were Mrs. Albertina Sisulu, UDF president; Cassim Saloojee, treasurer; Frank Chikane, UDF's Transvaal vice president; Ishmail Mohammed, the Transvaal leader of the Anti-President's Council Committee; and leading trade unionists Sam Kikine and Isaac Ngcobo.

The day before the raid, rioting

swept through Crossroads, a squatter community outside Cape Town. Government authorities reported that some 13 blacks had died as riot police battled the crowds. Many residents had stayed home from work and school that day to protect their homes, fearing that the government's planned resettlement of their community to a new town called Khayelitsha was imminent. Most of the 65,000 residents of Crossroads object to the location of the new town, which is about 25 miles from the city.

The arrests and rioting have de-

stroyed the conciliatory image that President P.W. Botha had been nurturing with his announcements of policy reviews. In early February, he had stated that certain business districts would be opened to traders of all races and that a new government structure would be established for urban blacks. He had also indicated that the government would be reexamining its policies of forced removals of blacks to the "homelands," citizenship for blacks, influx control in urban areas, and the Immorality and Mixed Marriages Acts. ■



UDF rally in Natal, August 1984

## ANGOLA

### The shadow of South Africa

The first national MPLA-Workers' Party conference, held recently in Luanda, adopted resolutions to strengthen the role of the party and its economic policy. But with regard to the MPLA's policy toward South Africa, the conference was less decisive.

Two proposals on South Africa reflected opposing tendencies within the party leadership. The "hardline" position called for increasing the military campaign against Jonas Savimbi's rebel Unita forces; the "moderates" backed continued negotiations with Pretoria as the best means of ending South African military incursions and support to Unita.

The conference found neither motion appropriate: the first, because in the long-run Angola does not have the resources to successfully escalate the war, and the second, because Angola's willingness to negotiate in the past has produced few positive results, with

South Africa continuing to violate the Lusaka accord of February 1984. The delegates instead adopted an ambiguous resolution calling for a firmer approach while at the same time keeping the door open for negotiation.

The war against the Pretoria-backed Unita was also a key item on the agenda of President José Eduardo dos Santos' first official visit to Zaire in February. Dos Santos and President Mobutu Sese Seko signed bilateral agreements on defense and security, and the cross-border movement of people and goods. A joint commission to oversee border security also was established to prevent both countries from allowing their territories to be used to launch attacks against the other. The Angolan government claims these agreements will facilitate its struggle against Unita along the Zairian border, and will help deal with the 54,000 refugees that have fled from war-torn areas in Angola to Zaire's Shaba Province.

Angola's "special relationship"

with Portugal, meanwhile, has deteriorated rapidly because of Portugal's alleged support for Unita. The President of the Portuguese-Angolan Friendship Association, Daniel de Matos, pointed out recently that relations "were at their worst" because of "activities in Portuguese territory by counter-revolutionary groups mounting a series of subversive actions" against Angola. Although Lisbon has denied the allegations, trade between the two countries has suffered.

Angola has turned to other countries to pick up the slack. Trade with Spain increased sharply in 1984. Angola recently signed a fishing agreement with Spain, ordering 37 fishing ships. To improve the flow of goods between the two countries, a regular Angola-Spain shipping line is also expected to be inaugurated this year.

Trade with Brazil has similarly been stepped up, rocketing from \$4 million in 1973 to \$230 million in 1984. Brazil is now Angola's third largest trading partner. Over 2,000 Brazilian workers are helping to build Angola's largest hydro-electric dam under a \$500 million contract. As Minister of Petroleum and Energy Pedro de Castro Vandunem predicted, "Trade is going to increase greatly. We think Brazil can serve as an alternative to Portugal to help us in the technical field." ■

## LESOTHO

### First elections in 14 years

The first national elections in 14 years are scheduled to be held early in 1985. In preparation, King Moshoeshoe II dissolved the National Assembly on December 31, and a committee is realigning the boundaries of the 60 constituencies that will choose new members.

Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan has been hinting for more than four years that the country would return to an elected government. Pressure from the West and new electoral rules that could work in his favor appear to have influenced him to finally hold elections this year.

The last time the country had an election, Jonathan threw out the

results and retained power, after it appeared that his Basotho National Party (BNP) would be defeated by the opposition Basotho Congress Party (BCP). The BCP is still the major opposition party and heads a coalition that plans to back a single candidate against the BNP in each district.

Opposition leaders have charged that the ruling party is using coercive tactics that will undermine the elections. Charles Mofele, a leader of the United Democratic Party, charges that supporters of opposition parties are being intimidated into joining the BNP and that people have been threatened with violence if they do not vote for the BNP.

The BCP has proposed that the South African government be asked to help register the estimated 140,000 Basothos who work in South African mines and to allow them to vote in South Africa on election day. South Africa tacitly supports both political and military opposition to Jonathan's government, and Basotho miners are allegedly being pressured to join the BCP.

Jonathan's policy towards South Africa and his relations with socialist countries are expected to be major election issues. The BCP supports the signing of a security pact with South Africa, while Jonathan, even under much pressure from the South African government, has refused to do so, claiming that it would compromise Lesotho's national integrity. ■

## **MOZAMBIQUE**

### **MNR incursions on upswing**

The Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) stepped up its attacks against the Frelimo government in January and February, blowing up a bridge, sabotaging a power line, severing rail links, and ambushing buses. Most of the activity took place near Maputo and the border with South Africa. MNR forces have also turned on foreign workers and travelers, killing more than a dozen in recent months.

MNR forces are active in all 10 provinces of Mozambique, including Nampula, Cabo Delgado, and

Zambezia in the north, where they have recently intensified their attacks. The entire Mozambican army as well as some 150,000 civilians are now involved in the counter-offensive, and workers have formed militias to defend key sites in the capital.

The MNR is supplied primarily from South African sources, reportedly through bases in Malawi, the Comoros Islands, and Transvaal province, South Africa. Airplanes dropping supplies to the rebels in northern Mozambique and flying back toward Malawi were sighted repeatedly in January.

Foreign Minister Pik Botha admitted for the first time in early February that elements from within South African territory are supporting the MNR. He also accused European and Arab countries of supporting the MNR, hinting that Portugal is involved, and he maintained that foreign interference is responsible for undermining the Nkomati accord. However, the South African government continues to deny that it is violating the agreement.

President Samora Machel claims that Portuguese involvement in the MNR is the major obstacle to halting the violence in Mozambique. Right-wing political forces, including a contingent of former settlers in Mozambique, and individuals in the Portuguese government are allegedly behind the increasingly public connection between Portugal and the MNR. Portuguese businessmen evidently hope that an MNR takeover would enable them to recoup financial losses they suffered at independence. And a Mozambican newspaper, *Noticias*, recently reported that Portuguese army officers have been recruiting and training mercenaries to fight in Mozambique.

U.S. military aid to Mozambique, recently requested by the Reagan administration, is reportedly not intended for use against the MNR, though it is certain to help strengthen the Frelimo government. According to the administration, the purpose of the aid is to bolster the Nkomati accord, which the U.S. claimed was a major sign of the progress resulting from its contro-

versial policy of constructive engagement with South Africa. The accord is now in serious trouble, however, due to South Africa's failure to curb the MNR.

The aid package, expected to gain easy approval in Congress, will include \$100,000 to train Mozambican officers in the U.S. and \$1.25 million in "non-lethal" military supplies, including uniforms, trucks, and communications equipment. ■

## **SWAZILAND**

### **Students, government clash**

The Ministry of Education took over the administration of the University of Swaziland in early February after government actions failed to quell student unrest. At the same time, government troops moved onto the campus to put an end to a student boycott of classes.

The campus had been closed on January 11, reportedly as a result of the publication of a report on last year's student unrest at the university. The report, published by a judicial commission of inquiry, charged that students were promoting activities of the African National Congress (ANC), the banned South African opposition group. It also stated that the university was enrolling too many foreign students, especially South Africans who had left their own country for political reasons.

After the most recent university closure, students were required to apply for readmission. When they returned, they were forced to sign a form agreeing not to meet off campus nor to take up grievances with student representatives. They began their boycott when 21 of their colleagues, including two student council members, were denied readmission.

The events at the university have further undermined relations between Swaziland and the ANC. The Swazi police have accused the ANC of plotting the December murder of their deputy chief of police, and subsequently shot an ANC "hit man" who they said was responsible for the deputy's death. The ANC charged that the story was fabricated. ■

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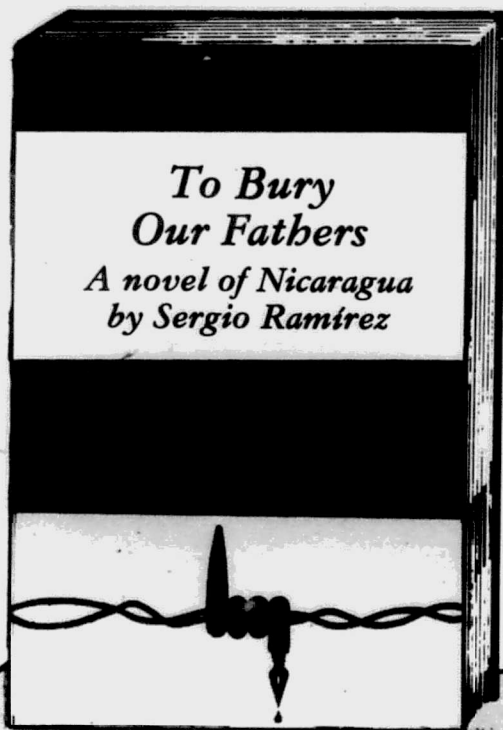
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# The Politics of Food Aid

The Reagan administration has been accused of politicizing humanitarian assistance to drought and famine-ravaged Ethiopia. The U.S. in turn has blamed the Addis government for placing its own internal political considerations before the needs of its people. Will Ethiopia become a tragic example of the use of food as a political weapon?

BY JACK SHEPHERD

Africa and its people are in peril. Some 150 million Africans—perhaps one person in every three below the Sahara—are in dire need of emergency food. Five million African children died from hunger-related causes in 1984, while millions of other Africans face permanent physical and mental damage from chronic malnutrition. Emergency food aid will be needed through 1985 to combat what one United Nations report calls "the worst human disaster in the history of the continent."

The West's response to starvation in Africa raises some important issues. The United States produces and exports more food than any other nation, and dominates the world food supply. This nation also distributes more than half of all food aid worldwide, and holds most of the world's surplus grain reserves. This vast productive capacity, posed against Africa's desperate needs, illustrates the awesome power of U.S. food aid. The United States, by feeding some people and not others, for whatever reasons, controls not only governments but also lives.

Ethiopia's current famine offers an

*Jack Shepherd is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he is a specialist on U.S. foreign policy and food aid in Africa. He is the author of eight books, including The Politics of Starvation, which investigated the drought and famine in Ethiopia in 1973-74.*



Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam: "Unlike Selassie, Mengistu did not keep silent about drought and famine in Ethiopia"

Since the drought and famine of 1972-74, no African nation has drifted along the edge of disaster more continuously than Ethiopia. Ten years ago, Emperor Haile Selassie's silence during a worsening drought and famine contributed to his overthrow. After a series of power struggles, Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam hammered together a Marxist-Leninist government. He inherited severe economic and developmental problems, continuing hunger in the provinces, guerrilla warfare in Tigré and in Eritrea, the scene of Africa's longest-running war, and continuing tensions in the Ogaden with Somalia.

Mengistu tried to restructure Ethiopia's agriculture and economy along Soviet lines while fighting wars on two fronts. Breaking with the West, he signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, and welcomed the largest arms airlift in Africa's history, with a still-unpaid \$2.5 billion bill.

Unlike Selassie, however, Mengistu did not keep silent about drought and starvation in Ethiopia. In June 1978, shortly after the Russian arms airlift, the Ethiopian state-controlled radio broadcasted an alert that some 1.5 million people in its northern provinces, including Tigré and Wollo, faced starvation and that 400,000 tons of food aid were needed. Response from the West was almost nil, despite a warning that year from World Food Programme experts

opportunity to examine the debate about food aid to that nation. Some 7.7 million Ethiopians face starvation; 2.5 million are starving now. Ethiopia's total food need for 1985 is 1.5 million tons of grain. According to the U.S. House Select Committee on Hunger, some 300,000 Ethiopians starved to death in 1984.

that Ethiopia was "one of the most likely sites for the world's first super-famine."

By November 1978, Mengistu himself publicly called the situation "frightening" and the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) claimed that some 2 million peasants were at risk in Wollo alone. The RRC issued an alert for international food aid to counter the impact of "drought and war." Little was forthcoming.

Again, in 1982, exactly 10 years after the drought that led to the 1973 famine in Wollo and Tigré, late rains and large losses of sorghum and other crops caused serious food shortages. In March, the World Food Council forecasted an impending food crisis, and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) predicted a cereal deficit that would grow to 1.2 million tons by 1986—an estimate that may turn out to be conservative. In September and again in October, the RRC issued alerts. It warned that some 5 million people, mostly peasant farmers, were affected, and some 700,000 needed immediate food aid.

"Donor fatigue" or politics numbed the West's ability to respond. The World Food Programme estimated Ethiopia's grain deficit at 250,000 tons in 1982, and American satellite projections put the 1983 shortfall at about 2 million tons. The need was clear. But the European Economic Community contributed just 80,000 tons, while the U.S. responded with only 8,172 tons. Desperate peasant farmers ate their planting seeds and then abandoned their villages to search for food. By March 1983, some 28,000 hungry Ethiopians were already gathered in a destitute make-shift camp in Korem, and feeding stations operated by private voluntary organizations were setting up in other towns along the paved road between Addis Ababa and Asmara.

Tigré and Eritrea had received little rain for five years; sometimes rainfall reached only 30 percent of the normal rate. Harvests were so poor that peasants survived by eating cactus fruit and wild grass seeds. But despite repeated estimates of the starvation and continued requests for food aid, the Reagan administration turned its back on Ethiopia in 1983.

One of the biggest relief organiza-

tions in Africa, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), was already dispensing food aid on the ground in Ethiopia. CRS, with an annual budget of \$345 million, operates in some 11 African nations, largely as a dispenser of U.S. government food aid under the PL480 "Food for Peace" program. In the autumn of 1982, food supplies had run short in Wollo, and CRS workers made an urgent plea to the United States government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for emergency food under Title II of PL480.

In a private letter to me in August 1983, a frustrated CRS worker wrote: "We have been agonizing since November 1982 as to how to get the administration to turn around on its position. Our November request to AID for 838 MT [metric tons] for distribution in Wollo province of Ethiopia did not receive a favorable response until May 1983."

In November 1983, CRS ran low on food aid in Tigré and submitted a request to Washington for 16,000 metric tons of grain for that province. Despite the well-documented need and CRS's readiness in the field, again the response was slow, not coming until May 1984, six months later. Then, CRS was promised only half of what it needed: 8,000 tons. The second 8,000 tons were not approved until July—nine months after the initial request.

The Reagan administration had decided that decreasing food aid to Africa—and especially to Marxist Ethiopia—was an excellent way to cut the budget. AID's congressional presentations reveal that aid requests under PL480 for all of Africa decreased each year in fiscal years 1982 through 1984. Despite several months of alerts about starvation in Ethiopia, AID requested that no food aid be sent to that nation in FY 1984. That meant that the Reagan administration was cutting aid from 8,172 metric tons in 1982 to zero in 1984—despite warnings that millions of Ethiopians were starving and that the nation needed 400,000 tons of emergency food aid.

It took prodding from Congress and the press to get the administration to act, and then it acted with extreme caution and snappish accusations. The former U.S. ambassador to the United

Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, complained about supplying food to the Ethiopian Marxist government because it would never reach the hungry. "The diversion of relief goods by a large number of people between the donor and the intended recipient is a very big problem. . . in Ethiopia," she told reporters. But relief organizations in Ethiopia once again assured the West and especially the U.S. that 90 percent of the emergency food aid was reaching those who needed it most.

In March, two AID officials announced that donated food was being sold in Ethiopia to buy Soviet arms for the civil war in the northern provinces. For this reason, the officials said, the Reagan administration would resist congressional efforts to increase food aid to Ethiopia. "In the area controlled by the government," said one official, "there is no food shortage right now."

But a European Economic Community investigation in April found that "no conclusive evidence has been produced to show that food aid has been systematically diverted to the armed forces." A bipartisan congressional investigation also concluded that there was no evidence of food diversion.

On October 18, 1983, the FAO announced that 22 African nations were facing "catastrophic" food shortages and would need 3 million tons of emergency food aid. (Two more nations were added in 1984.) But by the end of 1983, AID had cleared only 71,363 metric tons of emergency food relief to just eight African nations. That December, a group of private volunteer relief agencies complained publicly that the Reagan administration was not moving fast enough on food aid to Africa. In January 1984, Secretary of State George Shultz announced that U.S. food aid to Africa would climb to 187,000 tons.

Then a strange process unfolded. Under pressure, Reagan officials announced that the administration would seek a supplemental appropriation of \$90 million for African aid. Members of Congress called the amount too small, however, and sponsored a bill calling for \$150 million, which passed the House. But the bill was halted in the Senate when the administration attached to it a controversial amendment calling for military aid to El Salvador and to insurgents

in Nicaragua. It was an unusual mixing of food aid and military assistance.

Fearing that African food aid would disappear in a wrangle over Central American arms, Senator John Danforth of Missouri freed \$90 million by attaching it to a bill to subsidize domestic heating, which was passed and signed by the president in March 1984. But the other \$60 million remained encumbered by the Central American military attachments until June. *The New York Times* noted in an editorial: "While Washington argued, millions in Ethiopia and other drought-ridden African countries remained hungry."

Meanwhile, the Ethiopians had requested 400,000 tons of emergency food aid by August 1984, raised that amount to 600,000 in October, and now seek 1.6 million tons to feed 7 million starving people. Emergency food aid will be needed through 1985, and perhaps into 1986.

Since the television broadcast in late October, the outpouring of food aid from the Reagan administration and the West has been enormous, perhaps unprecedented. By January 1985, the administration had pledged some \$590 million in food and other emergency aid to Africa. U.S. food aid to Ethiopia since October is the largest food aid program ever granted to that nation, totaling \$151.5 million. This will provide more than 276,212 tons. But why did the West take so long to respond?

In October, the Reverend Charles Elliot, former director of Christian Aid in Great Britain, accused the U.S. and Britain of deliberately withholding food aid for two years from Ethiopia in an effort to topple the Marxist government. "They thought that if there was a major catastrophe, it would probably change the regime again," he told the *London Observer*. "They took the view that if there was another famine, it would serve the Ethiopian government right, that they had it coming to them." There was enough substance to the charge to give it weight: The United States did express initial reluctance to feed Ethiopia because of its close ties to the Soviet Union.

Ethiopia is Africa's leading Soviet-supported state, with \$2.5 billion in Soviet arms and dependence on Soviet energy supplies. Some 3,000 Soviet and

5,000 East German advisers serve in Ethiopia, along with 6,000 Cuban soldiers who protect Mengistu's flank along the Somalia border. Half of Ethiopia's army of 250,000 men is tied down in sporadic guerrilla combat among the people of the hungry northern provinces. War in Ethiopia consumes at least 30 percent of the impoverished nation's budget.

Critics argue that Mengistu and his government are not fully addressing the problems of drought and famine. In September 1984, after five years of delay, the Mengistu government formally created a communist party intended to institutionalize socialism. It marked the occasion of the tenth anniversary of its revolution and the formation of the Ethiopian Workers Party with large parades and outdoor displays orchestrated by the North Koreans.

Estimates of the cost at first ranged

to \$200 million, but are now thought to be about \$45 million, much of which came as gifts from the Soviet-bloc countries. All Ethiopian ministries, however, contributed to one-tenth of their annual budgets for a general repainting and facelifting of public buildings. Worse, international relief agencies reported that during the summer, the Mengistu government gave priority at Ethiopia's principal port of Assab to ships loaded with cement and supplies for the celebration, while ships loaded with emergency food were forced to anchor nearby.

In contrast to aid from the West, the Soviet Union has pledged only 10,000 tons of rice—an unusual food not generally eaten by Ethiopians—to go with the ideology and weapons. This is about one-twentieth of the amount of food aid pledged by the United States. The Soviets have also promised 300 trucks, 12 planes, and 24 helicopters. Soviet aid



"By March 1983, some 28,000 hungry Ethiopians were already gathering at make-shift camps and feeding stations"



has not gone down well with the hungry Ethiopians, however, one of whom told a CRS worker: "We cannot eat guns."

Ethiopia has guns and fighting in abundance. Both the Eritrean and Tigrayan guerrilla fronts have organized and reportedly operate feeding stations in the areas they occupy. This has reversed the classic guerrilla warfare pattern: Instead of peasants supporting and feeding a guerrilla army, the guerrillas are feeding and sheltering themselves and the peasants—often with internationally-donated food and supplies. They compete with the Mengistu government for international relief assistance.

Getting food to hungry Ethiopians in Wollo, Tigré, and Eritrea means dealing with the guerrillas, and supplying them. In some cases, Ethiopians have fled or been driven out of guerrilla-held areas to government feeding stations, or entered Sudan, which now has relief camps along its eastern border and urgently seeks emergency food aid as well.

Feeding Ethiopia has not been easy for the Reagan administration or for other Western donors. The Mengistu government still frequently gives priority to off-loading ships carrying Soviet arms rather than ships carrying food for people in guerrilla-torn areas. In December, it scolded aid donors for being slow and tried to tie the country's famine to their delayed response. The donors, in turn, accused the Ethiopians of "biting the hand" that feeds them.

The government also sought support among the donors for plans to forcefully move some 1.5 million peasants out of Eritrea, Tigré, and Wollo to better farmland in the southwest. Such a movement, depending on one's point of view, will either give the northern provinces a chance to recover ecologically from war, drought, and over-use, or create a free-fire zone.

Some private international donors have tried to get food to the hungry in guerrilla-held areas by way of trucks coming from Sudan. By February, of the American pledges, 50,000 tons was in government-to-government aid—more direct aid than any other nation—and another 167,000 tons was to be distributed by private relief organizations. Some of that food aid is moving into the

northern provinces of Wollo, Tigré, and Eritrea via Sudan—a "back-door" relief program to peasants under guerrilla control.

On the other side, the Mengistu government controls only sections of the three hungry provinces. North of a strip of no-man's land that runs east from Lake Tana, Mengistu's soldiers hold only the paved highway linking Addis Ababa, and Asmara in Eritrea, and perhaps seven garrison towns along the



**Monument marking 10th anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution: "Critics argue that the government has not fully addressed the problems of drought and famine"**

way. Food trucks driving along the road now have armed escorts.

Government-controlled feeding stations have been hampered by attacks from the guerrillas, while Ethiopian air force planes have reportedly bombed and strafed columns of refugees fleeing toward Sudan. To stop the flow of food into rebel areas, the Mengistu government has seized ships carrying food aid to Port Sudan after they off-load in As-sab. It is blocking efforts to truck food aid to some 2 million civilians starving in Eritrea and Tigré.

Voluntary relief workers cannot get into large sections of Tigré and Eritrea held by the guerrillas. Many of the people in these provinces are refusing to go to the government-run feeding stations for fear of being conscripted into the army or forcefully resettled in provinces to the south. Therefore, food aid cannot be distributed in Tigré and Eritrea and parts of Wollo on a sustained basis, and this has made the famine there critical. The U.S. House Select Committee on Hunger reports that some 1,000 Ethiopians are dying daily in Tigré; some 300,000 Tigreans have migrated across their western border to relief camps in Sudan.

The politics of starvation in Ethiopia are complicated by one further point. In late October, the two principal guerrilla fronts publicly called for a truce to allow food aid shipments to reach Ethiopians trapped by the fighting. The Mengistu government rather noisily rejected any recognition or contact with "bandits" and secessionists. But the push for a ceasefire to allow food aid to reach starving civilians has continued.

Such a plan, calling for a joint U.S.-Soviet effort, was proposed by Rep. Jim Wright and passed by the Democratic Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives last November. In January 1985, during a trip to Cuba, three U.S. representatives suggested to Fidel Castro that Cuba might act as an intermediary between Mengistu and the guerrillas to bring about a truce so that food aid could be more widely distributed. If this occurs, it would mark a rare example of food aid being used successfully as a negotiating tool for peace.

War, drought, and hunger will exist in Ethiopia for a long time. In the northern provinces, an Oxfam report states, "There is little chance of breaking the constant cycle of drought-famine-emergency feeding." Drought and fighting have destroyed fodder grass, and erosion is occurring "on a catastrophic scale." The damaged provinces have lost more than 12 million acres of productive land. The region is described as "already a moonscape." Unless Ethiopia is stabilized with emergency food aid and peace so that long-term development can begin, the prize for victory in this poor nation will be an infertile wasteland. □

# Joyce Aryee

## Secretary for Education, Ghana

Thanks to the education policies of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, women have been able to play a significant role in the country's political and economic development. But women in Ghana still find themselves bound by cultural and social attitudes which hinder their ability to participate to their full potential.

INTERVIEWED BY MARGARET A. NOVICKI

**Africa Report:** 1985 is the end of the UN Decade for Women. Looking back over the past ten years, how would you assess the advancement of women in Ghana?

**Aryee:** The situation of women in Ghana is a paradox. As we have a matrilineal system, in some of our traditional societies, such as the Akan society, the woman plays quite an important role. As far as kingship or chieftom is concerned in all Akan societies, almost the final say as to who should be king or chief is the woman. We also have women who can be chiefs in their own right, not queen mothers. Women can actually be stooled as chiefs with paramoucies.

Yet at the same time, we are still hewers of wood and drawers of water. I think that part of the problem is very economic—a question of economic power. Ghana has been a male-dominated society for very long. Although traditionally, it is the two families who marry, in reality, it is still the man who marries the woman and it is he who is supposed to look after her.

For a long time, women had very little economic means, particularly in the purely agrarian societies. Even if she had a plot of land, it was meant to serve the home; it was not her property. Women were always supposed to depend on a brother, an uncle or husband. So while Ghanaian society has always spawned women of authority, women have also always played their traditional role throughout the world—at the baseline of social advancement.

Fortunately, under the First Republic and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the potential of women was given a boost. Even before Dr. Nkrumah's time, there was a Ghanaian educationist, Dr. Aggrey, who said, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a

nation." That was a recognition of the important role that women play in society.

The real problem has been in the area of socio-cultural attitudes, plus Christianity, which relegated women to an inferior status. As victims of that problem, sometimes women themselves find it difficult to shake away from some of these prejudices. For quite a lot of women, marriage and childbearing are the ultimate achievements.

But with increased access to education during the First Republic, women got a boost. There are now many women lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects, administrators, teachers, and businesswomen. And trade is really dominated by women in Ghana. There have also been women in politics right from the beginning, so this paradox is quite interesting.

**Africa Report:** What national machineries for women's advancement exist in Ghana?

**Aryee:** In 1975, the International Women's Year, Ghana established the National Council on Women and Development [NCWD] to take charge of encouraging women in development and to enhance women's capacities for cottage industries, for farming, for small-scale business, and so on. The Council has been doing rather well, although its resources are limited.

Perhaps because of the kind of social stratification that we have in Ghana, it has been easier to deal at the initial stages with urban women. But now the NCWD is concentrating its work on rural women. I participated in two of its major activities: One was a workshop on fish smoking, sponsored by the NCWD with some help from the ILO and the Netherlands, which showed women how to improve on the kilns that they use, how to make trays so that they smoke more fish, thus cutting down on the chores and saving them labor.

There is also an integrated rural program on palm oil soap-making. Literacy is also usually introduced as part of these

projects in order to improve women's abilities to make ledger entries and to have banking facilities and so on. So in these respects, the Council has been able to lay some foundations for uplifting rural women.

**Africa Report:** What obstacles do urban women in Ghana face?

**Aryee:** The urban woman, aside from the prejudices she has to rid herself of, is not too badly off, because few laws which discriminate against women remain in Ghana. However, we still have some which are terribly retrogressive. For example, if you are a married woman, you can be turned down from getting a passport if you do not have your husband's written consent.

But the greatest obstacle to women's advancement is social attitudes. The laws may be there, but if a parent tells a daughter, "Why do you want to bother yourself so much with education? You are going to get married. You are going to have a home," instinctively the daughter will only do so much. Although now everybody knows that education is important, if marriage per se is far more important, then whenever you feel that education is likely to threaten your ability to marry, you may think twice. In fact, some women believe that if they attend the university, their chances of getting married become slimmer. Women are themselves victims of these prejudices, so it is an uphill task to correct these attitudes.

Lately, we have been trying to encourage women to study technical subjects, so the National Council on Women and Development has requested most technical institutions to reserve places for women to study things like automechanics, plumbing, electrical work, and so on. But some parents are discouraging their daughters from doing that, asking them, "Why do you want to get into a male domain?"

The status of women is not just a problem in the developing world, but in the developed world as well. After ten years, we have come a long way, but not half as far as we should. This is a problem of international dimension because when we talk of changing attitudes, some men think we are just being feminists. But part of the problem is also economic—jobs. If jobs are going to be available for all and the criterion is going to be merit, a lot of men's jobs will be threatened, so instinctively a lot of things will be done to make sure that this does not become a social dislocation.

Then, biological factors are always raised, that the woman's primary responsibility is to bear children. But I don't see how child-bearing impairs her ability to perform. We must accept this biological fact of life and make sure that when we are employing women, we will make allowances that for a certain time, she may not be able to work. But she can make it up when she comes back. Promotions should not be stalled because a woman goes on maternity leave.

Many women are hampered in performing their jobs because society does not always consider taking the decisions that will make it easier for a working woman to devote all her time to the job. Many countries do not have day-care centers or creches that are properly run and would make a woman feel completely safe leaving a child there. Also prejudices which dictate the roles a man is to play create problems, even when a husband or a father is quite prepared to devote a little time to ensure that the woman's career can also go on. These are

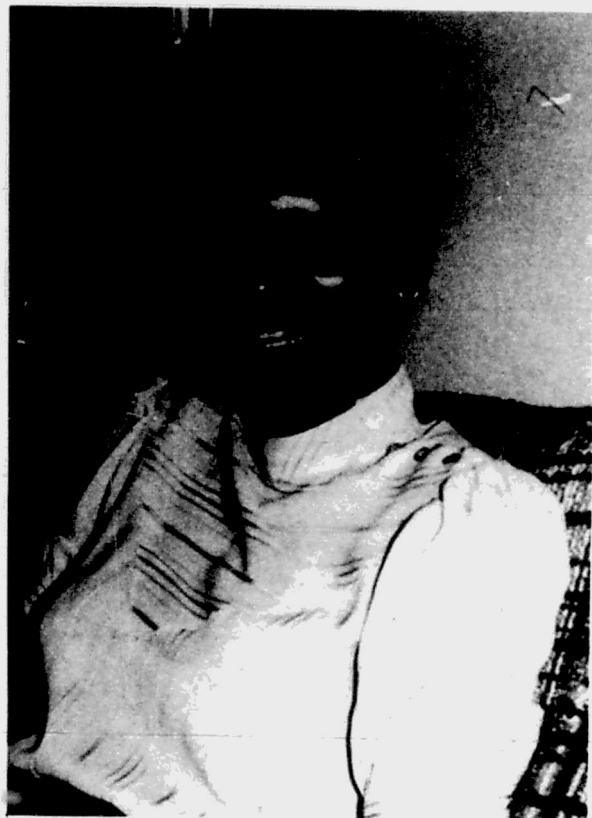
things that no laws can take care of, but a question of social attitudes.

How do we reassure our men that we can complement each other rather than compete against one another and that two heads are better than one? If society is to develop, then brain power regardless of its gender is necessary. Anyone who can contribute ought to be given the chance to do so and it will be for the total benefit of the entire society. When women become better educated, when their means improve, the quality of life of the family significantly improves—better food, clothing, housing, health, educational facilities, and encouragement to the children to go as far as they can.

In Ghana, most men and women alike admit that if it hadn't been for our mothers, we probably would not have come this far. So I think the realization that the woman is equally important is there, but then there are social attitudes to change and that will take a little bit of time.

**Africa Report:** It seems then that changing attitudes is ultimately a question of education. As Secretary for Education, do you foresee any way to focus in on this problem?

**Aryee:** At the moment, we have some fundamental problems with our system of education because of lack of resources. We have neglected the lower cycles of education, the very foundations of our educational system. So at the moment, the



"While Ghanaian society has always spawned women of authority, women have also always been at the baseline of social advancement"

concentration in this ministry is on improving the foundations of education without which we cannot have good secondary or tertiary education.

But the ministry is acutely aware of this problem because we have noticed that in the lower cycles, at the primary level, many girls go to school and do quite well. By the time they get to the upper primary level, they are beginning to slacken. When they get to secondary school, especially by the time they get to form three, before they sit for their "O levels," the slackening increases because somehow there is this inbuilt attitude that, "It doesn't matter, I don't need to go that far."

I have been talking to some of the heads of the female schools for starters to try to come to grips with some of the problems and to see just where we can begin. The National Council on Women and Development is also tackling this problem in earnest. It is trying to draw attention to the problem because it has happened for so long that we have probably begun to take it as a normal trend.

The other women's organizations, such as the 31st December Women's Movement, are trying to enhance the confidence of women, because once women are confident of what they can do and of what they have been doing, and they become aware of how important it is, I think that we will be able to get over these attitudes. Of course, we can't leave the men aside because they also have some macho problems to deal with.

In Ghana, improving the position of women ought to be seen as a national effort because what we will then do is to improve the quality of life of everybody. If a section of society is being left behind because of certain specific problems, then we address those problems rather than seeing it as a male/female issue which then becomes a dichotomy and is more difficult to resolve.

**Africa Report:** Despite the problems you have outlined, it still appears that there are many more women in Ghana in positions of political and economic power than in many other African countries. Why is that?

**Aryee:** As I said earlier, even before our very dynamic first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the value of education for women was recognized, so quite early, we had women doctors and lawyers, and women in the humanities. I think it was the value that was attached to education which propelled women to higher ranks.

In politics, it was realized that if you move the women, you move the entire nation because there is a woman in every home. And once you can create a greater awareness and a sense of urgency and purpose among women, you can move mountains. This is what has characterized this nation. There is still much much more to be done because although we have two women members of the PNDC, one woman minister, and two women deputy ministers, plus a host of women occupying professorships, heading departments, etc., we still don't think we are doing enough. We would like to do much, much more so that the quality of life of our people will improve.

**Africa Report:** What obstacles did you face as a woman in your career development?

**Aryee:** Actually, I have never felt that there have been obstacles. Of course I know that as far as my counterparts as women are concerned, I am probably not woman enough in

the sense that friends have accused me of being too career-conscious. Being divorced I suppose proves the point that I couldn't hold a career of a wife, but I could hold a career of a working woman. I have never felt any real threat in the male world because apart from a two-year stint in an all-female school, I have always been to mixed schools, where we have had to place ourselves as equals. Perhaps this may be a factor.

If I were married, however, I'd probably have a lot more problems because unless I had a husband who understood that the work I have been doing requires a lot of my time, I'd probably have to make a choice between continuing with my career and continuing with being married. It also proves a point that even here in Ghana, most women who reach the height of their career are either divorced, widowed, or if still married, maybe childless. Very few of them combine a good marriage, children, and a good career.

But here again, it boils down to social attitudes. I hope these prejudices will be removed with time because especially for a developing country, we just cannot afford to leave any section of the society behind. There is just too much to do. If we have to rely on sheer manpower to develop, then every human being is important in moving this nation into the latter part of the 20th century.

**Africa Report:** Has this government taken any new initiatives with regard to women?

**Aryee:** The PNDC is firmly committed to the belief that the nation will move forward better if the women are also deeply involved. There are four draft laws which, when promulgated, will help women a great deal. Ghana is a polygamous society. Customary law allows polygamy, although it does not preclude monogamy. But for a long time, we were only registering marriages under ordinances which we got from our colonial masters. So one of the laws is to register customary marriage.

The law of intestate succession is linked with the registration of customary marriage because if a man dies *intestate* and there is a dispute as to who the wife or wives are, then the distribution of whatever property he has is a problem. Having a matrilineal system means that sometimes part of the man's property may be family property which he inherited and which he is supposed to give back to the family. These are some of the laws which take recognition of the fallout of our laws and customs that militate against women.

The kind of encouragement that the PNDC has been giving to women's organizations is also very positive. The PNDC's own example by appointing women to such high places right from the beginning of the revolution is enough proof of its commitment and confidence in the abilities of women in the country. As I said, we are not doing enough, but the onus is not only on government. The onus is also on women and how quickly we can rid ourselves of the social prejudices and pressures that account for some of our behavior.

**Africa Report:** By concentrating programs and projects on women, how do you avoid marginalizing them?

**Aryee:** I think that we must see these programs as interim. But if we don't take care, this focus on specifically women's projects will marginalize them. That is why I said that in some projects, literacy has been a major part because it is just not enough to raise the woman's subsistence only by a little bit.

The thing is to move the woman away from a purely rural setting into a more scientific situation because even if a woman is in pottery-making, if she does not understand the science of it, she will only improve her condition marginally. You will find that in the urban areas, since the women are better educated, when they are helped to expand their businesses, the leaps and bounds are far greater than in the rural areas.

But a lot will depend on those of us who receive aid for women in development activities because we will have to rewrite our priorities. We will have to put in ingredients which will enable us to move away from stereotyping the careers of women and shifting them into other areas where they show sufficient potential. I know the National Council on Women and Development is doing this already because they have even moved to areas like technical subjects. They are not just going to concentrate on women remaining potters and basket-weavers and so on forever. Even their integrated soap-making project requires quite a bit of science. These must be seen as interim programs, not ends in themselves, but a means of insuring that the woman will be able to achieve more in the final analysis.

**Africa Report:** Are there any other issues concerning women that you feel need to be addressed?

**Aryee:** There is another issue that is a big problem on the continent of Africa, and I hope that as we near the end of the Decade, this question will be raised. I am talking about what is going to happen to the women and children in the severely drought-affected areas where famine has been so acute. The drought is an issue which particularly affects women. Sometimes the men in exasperation just move away. Because of the children, women cannot follow. They are forced to stay behind and bear the brunt of the drought.

Further, a lot of children have just been kept alive, and therefore they have suffered brain damage because of the severity of undernourishment. We may not feel it now, but ten years later, we are going to have a lot of people with mental impairments. These are children between the ages of two and seven. They will be nearing school age and they will not be able to cope. That is also going to affect the development of Africa.

This is why some of us feel very upset that a lot of donor countries wait until the problem becomes acute before they acknowledge it is a problem. Unless the child's ribs are showing, the stomach is distended, and the hair is falling out, it is not seen as a catastrophe. But in some of the countries, it is going to be a disaster. We as women have to do something about it. □



Alastair Matheson/UNICEF

**Day nursery in Ghana: "Many professional women are hampered by the lack of properly run day care centers"**

# The Law in Southern Africa: Justice for All?

Although Mozambican and Zimbabwean women fought alongside men for the independence of their countries, their hopes for an egalitarian society have not yet been realized. What lessons can be learned by the women of South Africa—who still suffer under the legal constraints of apartheid—from these countries' efforts to remove laws that oppress women?

BY ROSALIND THOMAS

**B**lack women of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa have two things in common. First, they have shared the burden of colonial racism along with the inequality of a traditionally patriarchal society. Second, they have experienced armed conflict in the struggle for self-determination and from that struggle, some have realized their own emancipation.

Since independence, the governments of both Zimbabwe and Mozambique have stated that an egalitarian society was one of their objectives. But have these governments improved the status of women under the law, thereby reaffirming their commitment to such policies? And how does the status of women in these two countries differ from that of women in South Africa, where the minority white government's objective—to reinforce traditional val-

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ues on women who have undergone forced emancipation due to government policies—appears to be opposite to that of the first two countries?

At the turn of this century, an elderly black woman led the first "chimurenga," or war of national liberation, against the British settler community in what was then known as Southern Rhodesia. She is known as Ambuya Nehanda—a spirit medium and a brave woman—who was hanged for her part in the rebellion.

In the final liberation war which resulted, after 100 years of minority rule, in the independence of Zimbabwe, black women again played an important role, not only as soldiers in the field, but also as nurses and providers of food and shelter for the fighting men and women, often at the risk of reprisals and torture by the Rhodesian Armed Forces.

With such a history, one would expect Zimbabwe to be ahead of most African countries in its treatment and recognition of women as active participants in the development of the country. Yet black women continued to have the legal status of minors until 1982, when the Legal Age of Majority Act was passed. And while their majority status has now

been recognized by law, in many ways it is still not a reality.

Zimbabwe operates under two systems of law. Roman-Dutch common law, imported from the Cape of Good Hope [Cape Town] in 1891, applies to all Zimbabweans in criminal matters and to all non-Zimbabweans in civil matters. Customary law was retained by the British to apply to all civil matters involving the "indigenous people," as it was considered inappropriate to impose foreign laws on them in personal matters. The authorities only intervened to change those traditional laws, such as the killing of twins and forced marriages, which were considered "repugnant to natural justice and morality."

Customary law essentially governs the legal status of women, marriage, and its consequences, including the ownership of property, the custody and guardianship of children, and inheritance. What existed in traditional practice was a system whereby women were in a state of perpetual tutelage under the protection and guardianship of the father initially; in his absence, the eldest male relative; and upon marriage, the husband.



Margaret A. Novicki

**"Only when Zimbabwe has successfully dealt with the problem of unequal treatment of women will the nation realize its full potential"**

Generally, women could not enter into binding legal relationships nor initiate or defend any legal proceedings in a court of law without the assistance of their guardian. Exceptions of course did exist, but these were brought about by changes in circumstance where women were seen to have embraced a Western lifestyle to the exclusion of customary norms or were engaged in commercial activities requiring legal capacity.

Although the Age of Majority Act has given women the status of majors, in reality women are still subjected to constraints inconsistent with their newfound status. These are not only legal, and therefore in direct conflict with the new law, but also cultural in the sense that men as well as women are refusing to accept the concept of women as "independent and capable human beings."

Consider, for example, the legal conflicts arising in the law governing the property consequences of marriage for all black Zimbabweans, which is still operative in Zimbabwe. Prior to marriage, women are required to obtain an "enabling certificate" showing that their guardian has consented to the marriage and that roora or lobolo (bride price) has been finalized. This means that although a woman reaches majority at the age of 18, on marriage she reverts back to the status of a minor and is rendered incapable of entering into legal relationships.

At the same time, when single women take the initiative and begin legal proceedings, their efforts are often thwarted by the attitudes of male judicial and marriage officers in the primary and community courts. Despite the provisions of the Age of Majority Act, these

officers still insist that women be assisted by their guardian or produce his consent. In addition, the "screening" role assumed by minor officials such as court messengers has often discouraged women from pursuing their cases.

This discrimination is readily understood, however, if one reads the Age of Majority Act in conjunction with the African Marriages Act and the Civil Marriage Act, both of which are still in operation. The latter two enactments preserve the traditional devolution of property in marriage and render the married black woman incapable of entering into contractual relationships unassisted by her husband.

Further, the procedural requirements for marriage imposed by both marriage acts reinforce the idea of minority despite the granting of majority status to women. As a result of this conflict, court officials have tended to follow those rules with which they are familiar, leading to much confusion in the interpretation of the law in this area of personal relations.

In a recent Zimbabwe Supreme Court decision, [*John Katekwe versus Mhondoro Muchabaiwa*: October 1984], Chief Justice Enoch Dumbutshena attempted to resolve the issue by ruling on appeal that a woman over the age of majority—18 years—could sue for seduction damages in her own right and that payment of lobolo was no longer a requirement. This decision should have removed the "cobweb of confusion and speculation surrounding the Age of Majority Act," as the Zimbabwe *Sunday Mail* put it. Women should now be able to choose whether to marry with or without lobolo, to claim equal rights over marital property, and to sue for damages unassisted in a court of law.

But this decision has opened up a whole new "can of worms," raising the issue of public sentiment on the erosion of traditional values, and putting to the test the government's commitment to its policy of "growth with equity." Thus, according to *Moto* magazine: "... public outcry and the government response to the court's decision, as echoed by Prime Minister Mugabe himself, raises questions; aggravates the confusion as to where women really stand; and gags the socialist government which calls for

equality of the sexes, but has now come into conflict with the people and the culture."

Indeed, in what can only be seen as a retrogressive step in the quest for equality, Prime Minister Mugabe stated in parliament that the court's decision did not necessarily reflect the views of the government, and that legislation would be introduced to amend the Age of Majority Act.

Regarding the property and inheritance laws affecting married women, the division of the marriage property is the cause of the most bitterness and concern. Traditionally, one year following the death of a man, his property was distributed among his children and some relatives. His wife was entitled to that property exclusively identified as having been derived either from her own work (*mavoko* property, meaning from the "hands"), or from the "cow of motherhood" given to her at the marriage of her daughters and thereafter for every child born to her son-in-law and daughter (*humai* property, meaning "mother").

Today, these laws have been distorted beyond recognition and distribution of property is often made soon after the man dies. In urban areas, it is not unusual to have the man's relatives demand his bank or post office savings book before he has even been pronounced dead. Women have cited instances where relatives have hired two trucks, one for the coffin and mourners, the other to transport the property, which is distributed immediately after the funeral to the deceased's blood relatives at the expense of his wife and children.

Similarly, even that property designated as *mavoko* or *humai* has been appropriated by unscrupulous relatives, often people unknown to the deceased in his lifetime. Indeed, some have gone so far as to accuse the widow of having caused her husband's death either through witchcraft or poisoning so as to justify their acquisition of the property.

These are not the only legal difficulties affecting women, but they are the most prevalent. Zimbabwean women

deserve better treatment not only because of their role in the liberation struggle, but also because it is an internationally recognized human right that women be free of such oppressive laws, and be allowed to participate effectively in a just and egalitarian society.

Since women comprise 51 percent of the population, it is in the interests of national development that they be recognized as an important and effective resource. This is clearly stated in a policy paper from the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs: "The liberation struggle and the important role women played in it clearly showed that Zimbabwean women as a social category are a largely untapped reservoir of initiative and of creative energy waiting to be pressed into service by their country through appropriate policy measures. . . It should be borne in mind, therefore, that in the context of national ideology and the principles on which the liberation struggle were based, a perpetuation of the inferior status of women is an embarrassment

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which the government and the people of Zimbabwe cannot afford to accommodate."

Changes in the law are clearly necessary, but reform in the legal process does not necessarily imply a change in long-established male attitudes, or for that matter, in women's perceptions of themselves. Women have a major role to play in their own effective emancipation and must rid themselves of their attitudes of inferiority and subservience to men. If the recent "operation cleanup" is any indication of prevailing attitudes, then Zimbabwe still has a long way to go in the emancipation process.

In December 1983, thousands of women were rounded up and subsequently detained under the emergency clause of the infamous Vagrancy Act of 1960 in an effort to "rid" the country of all "prostitutes." Women were indiscriminately detained irrespective of occupation, but notably only if they were black or "colored." Their rights under the Age of Majority Act, as well as their fundamental rights, were rendered meaningless. What was most discon-

cerning about this exercise was the support given to the government by many women who failed to recognize the insult levied on their gender and claimed that since prostitution was the "main" cause of disruption of family life, the entire operation was justified.

Only when Zimbabwe has successfully managed to deal with this problem of unequal treatment of women will the nation be able to realize its full potential. Until that "battle" has been won, no amount of legislative reform will suffice and the country will never attain its goal of establishing a progressive, democratic, and egalitarian society.

\* \* \*

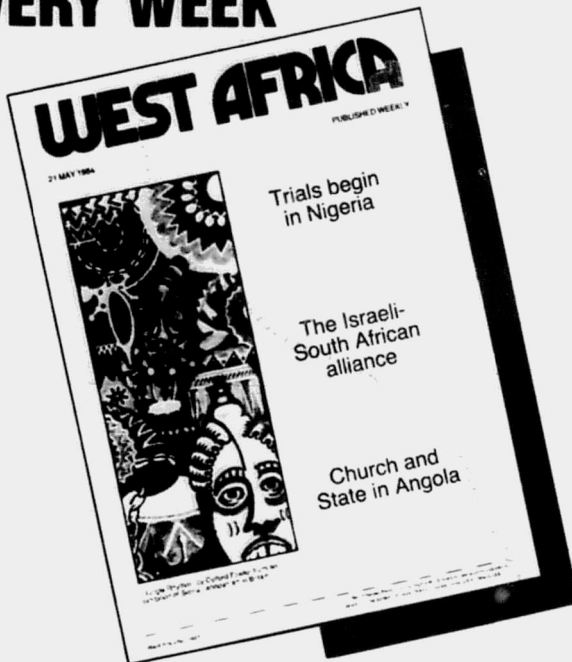
The formation of a women's detachment in the military wing of Frelimo in 1967 was an early recognition of women's ability to participate in shaping Mozambique's destiny. As was the case in Zimbabwe, the liberation movement was revolutionary not only in advocating change through armed conflict, but also

in introducing revolutionary attitudes toward the role of women which were in direct conflict with traditional practices, most of which were very similar to those which applied in Zimbabwe.

When Mozambique obtained its independence from the Portuguese in 1975, President Samora Machel stated that the first phase in the struggle had been won, but that the country had yet to overcome the colonial legacy of illiteracy, disease, poverty, and economic dependence. He stressed the involvement of women as an integral part in the transformation process, and addressing a conference of the Organization of Mozambican Women (OMM) in 1976, Machel stated: "The participation of Mozambican women in all sectors is an essential condition for the triumph of our revolution. It is the essential condition for the advancement of the new society we wish to create."

It must be remembered from the outset that Mozambique, unlike Zimbabwe, did not possess a civil code of law at independence. When independence was won, the Portuguese literally disman-

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ted the entire structure of law and government which had served their own purpose during the colonial years. As a result, the Frelimo government was forced to introduce a new legal order, while depending in the meantime on the dictates of traditional law or the reasoning of the cadres who assisted in advising and governing the various villages.

For this reason, initial attempts to bring about changes in the legal status of women were met with male opposition in the form of intimidation and violence. Frelimo's directives on equal educational opportunities for both girls and boys were often ignored, and bride price, which had been forbidden, was still being demanded in marriage contracts. Opposition to the egalitarian policies of the government came from both the village elders and women in prestigious positions, who resisted any alliance with "illiterate peasant" women whom they considered beneath them.

As a consequence of these attitudes, the government initiated a major educational program under the auspices of the OMM. Employment and wage discrimination were expressly forbidden, and the wrongs of sexism were broadcast through the media. Across the country, women were mobilized into action groups and attended workshops at the grassroots and national levels. The government met male opposition by bringing the offenders before disciplinary groups where their behavior was discussed and publicly criticized. Such men were then prevented from running in national elections or holding public office. The same penalty applied to persons practicing polygamy or demanding lobolo for their daughters.

Despite government backing and the gains made by the OMM, however, the attainment of equal status under the law remains a promise for the future. Difficulties facing the women's movement include the lack of sufficiently qualified leaders and organizers, the inadequate transportation system, and the problems of communication which are aggravated by the dispersed nature of the rural settlements throughout Mozambique, making access to women for educational purposes difficult if not impossible.

On the brighter side, the OMM has built two training centers administered

by the Ministry of Health, offering training, health education, and nutrition. Adult education programs are also available. Of the 10 planned regional centers, three have been completed and are now operating. Finally, the government is currently considering the codification of



**"South African women suffer more from their legal status as blacks in a white-controlled society than they have ever suffered as women in a traditional society"**

United Nations

a new Family Law which will guarantee the equal treatment of women.

It is clear that the Mozambican government is committed to its policy of egalitarianism. The lack of a codified legal system and the absence of sufficient trained legal personnel at independence have not prevented it from striving to attain its goal, even in the face of blatant opposition from the traditional sector.

\* \* \*

To speak of black South African women in the context of customary law would be naive, for they suffer more from their legal status as black women in a white-controlled society than they have ever suffered as women in a traditional society.

Under apartheid, South African blacks who comprise 70 percent of the population, are forced to live in designated "homelands" that comprise only 13.5 percent of the total land area. These tracts of land are scattered around the country, and arid conditions and infertile soils render them incapable

of supporting the people, forcing them to seek a livelihood in the so-called "white areas" as migrant laborers.

Movement of blacks is controlled by the pass laws, and every black person must carry a pass if he/she is over the age of 16. Failure to do so makes them liable to prosecution and imprisonment or "deportation" to a homeland. While the men make up the bulk of the migrant labor force, women are expected to remain behind and eke out a living from the barren soil.

The white authorities have attempted to reinforce African culture in the homelands. However, there is evidence that many of these traditional practices cannot be restored since they are now inconsistent with the realities of the apartheid system. The subsistence economy of the traditional village, which was based on communal responsibility shared by both men and women, has been eroded by the whites' discriminatory policies. At the same time, the government has sought to retain such customs as bride price which inhibit women and are obsolete in present society.

Because many women cannot support themselves or their children in the homelands, they too migrate to the cities to seek work or look for their husbands. The government makes a concerted effort to prevent these women from establishing themselves in the urban areas for fear that their residency would lead to a stable black population which would then demand permanent residence in white areas. Intricate rules have thus been devised which are arbitrarily applied to control the urban movement of women. Legislative provisions allowing residency are hedged with so many contradictions that applications for residence are often defeated on insignificant or technical grounds. Consequently, urban residence for women is so tenuous that they can only retain their legality as long as their husbands do not desert or divorce them or die.

Occasionally, the government has granted what has been called a "breadwinner's concession." However, to qualify, a woman must be prepared to leave her children in the homelands, preventing them from acquiring rights of residence. Many women have been forced to leave very young children in

this way, sometimes committing them to the care of older siblings or relatives.

In terms of employment, women from the homelands who go to the cities are the most exploited class of people, often earning far less than women of other races doing the same work and less than their male counterparts. Most women seek employment in domestic service, which is the least protected and therefore the poorest paid line of work. The Domestic Workers and Employers Project of 1978 recommended a pay increase of about \$30 per month for a full-time domestic worker working an eight-hour day. This level is still below the poverty line, and in any case, is not enforced by law.

Until South Africa changes its policies

and allows for full participation of all races in the governance of the country, nothing can be done to alleviate the position of black women by way of legal redress. At present, like their male counterparts, they do not even hold the citizenship of their country of birth nor the right to vote. In addition, South African black women suffer from the incapacity of being legal minors. The status quo suits the purposes of the government, but is bound to force the black women of South Africa to follow the example of their sisters to the north, by joining the liberation struggle against apartheid.

\* \* \*

It is evident that the law plays a critical role in determining how effective

women are in contributing to the development of their countries. If women are constrained from playing an active role in policy formulation and from participating in the development process, then the country itself suffers. At least 50 percent of the total available work force is being wasted. Further, any attempts to educate and prepare women for effective participation in the rebuilding of a nation are meaningless as long as there are laws that handicap them.

Economic development and the establishment of a progressive, democratic society will only be achieved when the laws that incapacitate women are removed completely and attitudes are changed to conform to reform of the legal situation. □

## Women in Zimbabwe: Transforming the Law

**F**ollowing Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, my government decided that no meaningful development could occur without the total mobilization of all human resources in our country. It was clear to us that Zimbabwean women—52-53 percent of our population—were by far the most disadvantaged. The government therefore established the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs to dramatize and underscore our determination to ensure that women's participation in development would be enhanced.

The Ministry is responsible for, among other things, pre-school education, massive literacy campaigns among women, community development-oriented programs, child-spacing together with the Ministry of Health, family health and so on. Many people who have been to Zimbabwe have had occasion to work closely with the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs, and while they will agree that its role has been limited, it has been very effective in mobilizing women, particularly in the area of crafts and in establishing their own training programs and new commercial ventures.

My own ministry was tasked with the responsibility of transforming the law as it oppresses women. In Zimbab-

wean African customary law, both Shona and Ndebele, women were perpetual minors from the cradle to the grave. Anyone born female in my country was regarded as a minor until marriage, regardless of age, with very few exceptions. They were under the guardianship of the father or some other male relative. They had no local standing to sue or be sued unassisted by some male relative. They could not contract.

Upon marriage, a woman immediately passed into the guardianship of her husband. The same consequences ensued and applied. If employed during marriage, her own income was regarded as her husband's additional income, and was taxed more heavily than her husband's. These disabilities were not due to the colonialists; they were direct consequences of African customary law.

We felt very uncomfortable with the fact that more than half of our population was so severely undermined and disabled after independence, particularly bearing in mind the role our women played in fighting side by side with men during the guerrilla war to achieve the total liberation of our country. We had to act.

We decided to relegate these aspects of African customary law to the dustbin of history by enacting the Legal

Age of Majority Act in 1982. Under this new statute, we fixed the age of majority at 18 for all people, men and women, and we specifically stipulated that African customary law was now abrogated to the extent that it imposed limitations on women which did not apply to men.

The entire population supported the new change until recently when our Supreme Court ruled that one of the implications of the Legal Age of Majority Act was that no male guardian or father could now sue for the seduction of his daughter once she had attained the age of 18. There has been a real uproar among the men in the country and we as a government are trying to find some quick response to mollify the outraged fathers and other male guardians whose right to do this has been abrogated by this act.

We have also embarked upon a very ambitious bill in my ministry to overhaul the entire law of succession. The present situation in Zimbabwe is that when a husband dies *intestate* (without leaving a will), African customary law applies with regard to the devolution of the estate. Our experience is that brothers or other male relatives of the deceased move in very quickly, even before the funeral, and clean up the place—seize the furniture, cars, the lot—in effect, dispossessing the survivor and the children. We find this unconscionable and totally immoral. Our women with whom we fought in the struggle have protested ever since 1980 that we are not really being consistent with our revolutionary fervor in assisting them to break this yoke of oppression stemming from African customary law. What to do about this has been the real issue.

Our experience in Zimbabwe is that African men cannot face up to writing a will lest it be a self-fulfilling prophecy, and that any Zimbabwean woman who suggests to her husband that he should write a will runs the real danger of finding herself without a husband. We have proposed that where there is therefore no will, the surviving spouse should be entitled to 50 percent of the estate or 40,000 Zimbabwean dollars, whichever is greater. And since most of the estates for 99.9 percent of the African population would be under \$40,000, she should then take the entire estate to use and enjoy in trust for the children until she remarries or dies, whichever occurs first.

We have run into a serious problem with the conservative men in my country—and I'm sure that's the experience of other African states as well. Their revulsion at this suggestion stems partly from the fact that they argue that to take the entire estate would violate not only ancestral arrangements since part of the property is said to have descended from the parents, but that this would amount to an illegal taking, which is prohibited under the constitution. We have arranged several meetings with women's organizations in this connection. We are determined to insure that this new law of succession will come into effect this year. It is something that my government regards as absolutely necessary.

Other problems have cropped up. What happens in a

situation where the deceased husband had two or more wives? ZANU's Women's League, which is very powerful, has taken in my view an unreasonable position to the effect that the second wife should really take nothing. Prime Minister Mugabe has said that by every indication, whether socialist or Christian, this is simply not fair.

We think that at the forthcoming conference with the League and with women from other sectors in the country, we will be able to persuade women to accept that when there is a second, third, or fourth wife, the first wife should in those circumstances be entitled to take 50 percent of the estate, to hold and enjoy in trust for the children until she marries or dies, whichever occurs first, but that the second, third, or subsequent wives should take a share together with the children with respect to the remaining 50 percent. We think we can persuade women to accept this. If they don't, I'm afraid there will be no new law of succession, because the men simply will not accept the suggestion that their second, third, fourth wives should be dispossessed by the first wife.

We are also facing another problem with respect to children who are regarded by the first wife as illegitimate. Many African men father children by the side. There is practically nothing repugnant in our customs in that regard—they are his children. The Women's League wanted to suggest that those children are really illegitimate. My government takes the position that there should be no illegitimate children in Zimbabwe. The relationship between the parents may be illegitimate, but the children cannot be illegitimate. Therefore, they should inherit by the full hand like other children of the father following his decease.

These are some of the practical problems we are grappling with in Zimbabwe. In this connection, I would like simply to underline the determination of my government to insure that those aspects of custom and tradition which have militated against the full participation of women as equal citizens in our society should be abrogated. Clearly, what is required is political education of the men who are extremely reluctant. They may be very ardent party supporters, but when it comes to these aspects of tradition, you find that they are foot-dragging and beginning to talk in very reactionary language about what would happen if women were granted full and total equality with men.

Prime Minister Mugabe is dedicated to the liberation of women before the end of this decade. I hope that our struggle in Zimbabwe, in some ways a case study, does indicate what my colleagues in the region and in Africa are trying to do. It is not an easy thing to suddenly pull a society out of a tradition in quest of modernization and development. □

—Eddison Zvobgo

Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs  
Zimbabwe

# Rural Transformations: Women in the New Society

While the emancipation of women remains a principal objective of the Frelimo government, the experiences of the women leaders of Trés de Fevereiro highlight the difficulties facing Mozambicans in their efforts to build a new society.

BY STEPHANIE URDANG

**L**eia Manhique was one of the first people to move into Trés de Fevereiro communal village in Gaza province, southern Mozambique in early 1977. It was the year that the region was hit with the worst floods in living memory. Leia Manhique's home was one of the many scattered along the Limpopo River. She responded with relief to the government's call for the population of the area to move into the communal villages that were being established on high ground.

The floods allowed the government to begin to put into practice a critical element of their policy of socializing rural agricultural production. "We were turning into fish, we had lived in water so long," said one of Leia Manhique's co-residents, referring to the fact that the Portuguese would not allow them to move their homes to drier ground. "We were mobilized by water," chuckled another.

Now eight years later, it must be difficult for this dynamic village leader and secretary of the women's organization

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to remember why she and the residents of the village moved with such urgency. The region is experiencing the worst drought in living memory. Over 100,000 people have died from the resulting famine.

But drought is not the only factor that has played havoc with the dreams of a new society that Leia Manhique took with her into Trés de Fevereiro. Neither is it the only reason for the economic crisis in which Mozambique now finds itself.

When the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) took over power at independence in 1975, it had behind it the experience of over a decade of armed struggle against a brutal colonial regime. During that period, the seeds of a new society were sown in the northern one-third of the country that was wrested from Portuguese control.

It was a period in which the ideology of Frelimo was consolidated, encompassing a vision for a totally transformed society based on socialist principles. It was an ideology that spelled out a firm need for the liberation of women. To quote Samora Machel, the president of Frelimo and now the president of Mozambique: "The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for our revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a precondition for victory."

The sudden switch, however, from control of liberated zones to control of the entire country with a population of over 12 million brought with it a vast array of problems. The government inherited a country without foreign exchange, a country devastated by years of war that had been preceded by many decades of Portuguese economic exploitation and brutal oppression. When 250,000 Portuguese settlers fled in the wake of independence, they took with them all the skills needed to run the administration and to provide the infrastructure for development. They left behind an illiteracy rate of over 90 percent.

Compounding this were some far-reaching mistakes in policy and practice regarding agricultural development. By the time these errors were acknowledged and analyzed, the severe drought had devastated much of the country. In addition, its border with South Africa has meant that Mozambique has always had to confront the prospect of South African intervention. The main agent of the apartheid regime's destabilization program in Mozambique has been the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), which it has funded heavily.

The MNR's targets are carefully chosen, and include food production and distribution networks, as well as all sym-

bols of transformation and development. A key target has been the communal villages.

In order to ensure the socialization of the countryside, Mozambique's economic development process was geared to three components: the state farms, the communal villages and cooperatives, and family farming. The communal villages were viewed by the party as essential to the transformation of rural agricultural production.

"The organization of peasants into rural communities," reads a report from the Frelimo third congress in 1977, "is essential for the development of collective life. . . and for the creation of necessary conditions for socialized agriculture. It is through collective production that the workers' ideological battle grows stronger. The villages permit a rapid growth of revolutionary class consciousness and the consequent freeing of the workers' immense creative capacity."

Restructuring peasant agricultural production is also key to the liberation of women. "The woman peasant is the most oppressed and exploited woman in Mozambique," states a resolution from the second conference of the Organization of Mozambican Women (OMM) in 1976.

"This observation is based on the objective reality that our principal activity is agriculture and that most agriculture is for subsistence and is done by women. The revolution must aim at transforming [subsistence] agriculture into organized, planned, collective agriculture. Mozambican women not only cannot remain outside this process, but they must be its principal agents and beneficiaries."

Communal villages, it was agreed, were to provide the crucial environment for meshing two goals—the development of collective agriculture and the liberation of women. One of the most challenging problems confronting the villagization program is the realization of both the party and OMM's commitment to the emancipation of women—to ensure that women are as prominent as men in all aspects of life in the villages, not only economic, but political and social.

Women stand to reap greater benefits from the creation of communal vil-

lages than men, given their predominant roles within the household and in food production. Women are the centers of the household and solely responsible for domestic labor; they are the main producers, as well as the reproducers of the labor force. Although men are vested with authority and power over the family, their labor is essentially peripheral.

What have the past eight years meant for Leia Manhique in Trés de Fevereiro? As a model communal village, Trés de Fevereiro received a greater share of government resources than other villages. But its experiences highlight many of the problems and successes that characterize the short history of the villages. At the time of my first visit at the end of 1980, Trés de Fevereiro's 16,000 residents were part of the 1.8 million people who had moved into the 1,350 communal villages from scattered homesteads after independence. They represented 18 percent of the rural population.

Trés de Fevereiro was one of the 460 to have an elected people's assembly, one of the less than 300 served by a health worker, one of the 515 with party cells, and one of a handful that had elec-

tricity and a telephone installed. Not all the villages, however, were as fully developed and most did not have access to the range of services that the state hoped to provide.

The women are up early in Trés de Fevereiro. Not long after the first crowing of the cock heralds the dawning day, the women have begun their work. There is water to be prepared for their husbands to wash, the fire to be lit for preparing breakfast, and the washing, dressing, and feeding of the children.

Grain is pounded for the mid-day and evening meal. By 5:30, the sun is already quite high in the sky, and the women set off for the plots of land which have been allocated to each family at the edge of the village. Children who cannot be left at home with other female family members are carried on the women's backs, and often remain there throughout the hoeing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting. Occasionally men work with the women in the fields. But for the most part, this is women's work, and it is strenuous.

The women's walk home after some five hours of labor might be the time to gather firewood, which is tied into large bundles and transported on their heads.



Leia Manhique (r.) holds manioc harvested from a Trés de Fevereiro cooperative garden

Stephanie Urdang

The rest of the day is divided among a variety of tasks: carrying water, preparing meals, cleaning the house and grounds around it, caring for children, more pounding, collecting firewood, washing clothes. While these tasks form the basis of the women's day throughout Mozambique, in Trés de Fevereiro, it is possible to discern slow, but definite change in this pattern.

"Mama" Leia, as she is known to all, is one of the 22 women members of the people's assembly. After the election of the 32-member assembly, which took a full day, the executive council was chosen—all men. "No," said a provincial official there to help organize the election. "The majority of the assembly members are women. There must be women on the executive." Three names were withdrawn and replaced by three women. Even though there are many more women residents in the village—due to male migration to the South African mines, to Maputo, or to state farms—it is still difficult for women to be elected to the top leadership.

Nevertheless, Mama Leia is one of the village's central leaders. As secretary of the village's OMM and as a member of the people's assembly, her presence is felt. During my two visits to Trés de Fevereiro, I seldom came in contact with male leaders. Mama Leia was the first to be notified when a problem or crisis arose, whether "women's affairs" or not.

One morning she complained that she had not slept the night before because two men had been fighting with knives and she had been called in to handle the problem. On a visit to the agricultural cooperative, she chastised a male colleague for arriving late. He had the key to the seed shed and had held up the work of the cooperative members.

"They should have been harvesting the corn," he said defensively. "If that's the case," she argued, "then you should have called a meeting last night to organize their work." She accused him of blaming the cooperative's lack of progress on the absenteeism of women. "It is not the women who come late to work. It is you." He left the field, clearly rattled.

And yet, within the year that separated my two visits, there was clear evidence that the efforts to mobilize the

village's workers had lost steam. Mama Leia was trying to organize a work brigade to help construct a neighboring village and was getting nowhere. "After all the help we got with building our village," she complained to me, "I feel so ashamed."

The literacy class, whose students were predominantly women, had been



**Pounding corn:** "The rhythmic thumping resounds throughout the village from early morning to late evening"

well-attended initially, but was no longer functioning. One student after another dropped out until classes were suspended altogether. The cooperative attendance had reduced considerably, and it had become virtually impossible to get women to attend weekly OMM meetings.

The sexual division of labor is a major factor behind this trend, as women's labor burden is simply too great. The women leaders I spoke to tended to be older women with daughters-in-law or adolescent daughters to take care of domestic chores in their absence. Taking an active role in the political life of the

village meant a triple burden—work in the home, in the fields, and in the political structures—and there simply was not enough time in the day. Two hours of literacy classes after many hours already spent in the fields under the hot sun is a lot when meals must still be cooked and household chores completed. In general, there was little sign of role changes that could lead to a breakdown in the sexual division of labor.

Introducing technological advances, however, holds the potential to lighten women's domestic labor. Among the most arduous and time-consuming of household tasks are collecting water and pounding grain. The collection of water is solely the responsibility of women. Mama Leia recalled walking many miles for water and carrying the heavy 20-liter can on her head for the journey back. She also remembered scooping contaminated water from the river to use for laundry and washing dishes and sometimes, when nothing else was available, for drinking.

One of the incentives which attracted people to the village was the promise of centrally located clean water. Four pumps were installed, one of them electric. The walk to the central square for water would take at most 15 minutes. The wait in line varied, but was seldom more than 10 minutes. The pump was the meeting ground where women chatted and news was shared.

The four pumps could have freed considerable time from domestic chores. On my first visit, however, the three manual pumps were out of order. About a year later, one was working again; the other two were not. So the time spent waiting in line for the pump was up to half an hour. It was no longer time-saving, though the chore was far less back-breaking.

Before long, the electric pump would certainly need repair. The maintenance *responsavel* had acquired some knowledge of machinery while working in the South African mines, but had no formal training. There were few trained technicians and few vehicles in the province and a continuing fuel crisis made transport erratic. If spare parts were needed, they would have to be imported, and the time this would take, compounded by the critical shortage of

foreign exchange, could mean that the pump would be out of order for many months at a time.

The electricity-driven grain mill suffered a similar fate. Pounding corn takes many hours. The rhythmic thumping resounds throughout the village from early morning to the late evening. It is a testimony to the long hours and physical exertion that goes into this work, requiring considerable stamina and strong back and arm muscles—a labor for which women are trained early.

The new grain mill presented a chance to cut down on the work. However, a few weeks after it was installed, the mill broke down and remained non-functioning for almost a year, undermined by the problems of repairing such technology. And that its eventual repair was not greeted with widespread relief is an indication of how the constraints of underdevelopment and of culture intervened to lessen its impact.

The women are hesitant to prepare their "papa"—the corn meal porridge that is their staple food—from the mechanically ground corn. "We do it better by hand," they told me. "The men say: 'We haven't eaten until we have eaten proper papa.'" The traditional way to prepare papa requires that the corn is soaked before pounding. Only dry corn could be ground in the mill. Women took pride in the way they prepared the food, and did not want to change.

Mama Leia beamed with pride when she showed me the mill, but did not in fact use it herself. Her pride had more to do with the mill's function as a status symbol—new technology which no other village in the area possessed—than as a potential labor-saving device.

Closely tied to the question of women's labor and rural transformation are the customs that are considered negative, even oppressive to women. Polygamy and bride price—two of a number of customs targeted for change—are closely linked to the rural economy.

States an OMM document: "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 labor force at his service."

Concerning bride price, or "lobolo" as

it is widely known, the document said: "Its rationale is that it is compensation for the transfer of labor power from one family to another. This puts women into a situation of total dependence on men, who, because they have paid for them, can use and disown them like mere objects."

Such statements are unusual in Africa. There has been a tendency for countries at independence to revert back to such customary practices which were outlawed by colonial regimes—a reaction to the colonialists' denigration of African culture and values.

While the need to give renewed value to Mozambican culture has been emphasized, those customs considered harmful, regardless of whether or not they are "African," would not be tolerated in the long run. They are at odds with the new society based on principles of equality that is the goal of independent Mozambique.

In Trêz de Fevereiro, these customs have come under attack. A neighborhood OMM leader told me that these issues are raised at meetings. "I explain that we must fight against lobolo. But then the old men will say, 'How can we end lobolo? What will we profit? We have raised our daughters and now someone comes and takes them away without paying.' However, because of mobilization, the two marriages I have attended in the past six months didn't have lobolo."

Village youths expressed their abhorrence of lobolo. "This custom must end," said Virginia Mtevuye, a worker in the consumer cooperative. "The man always says 'I bought you.' But we know you can't buy a person." Jose Siteye, her colleague, added: "The woman is particularly concerned, so it is easier for her to see the need to refuse lobolo. She sees the problems it created between her parents and among her neighbors. So she understands that if she accepts lobolo the same problem will be hers."

But for every young couple committed to a society free from polygamy and lobolo, there were older men and women willing to continue the practice. Their sons and daughters often had difficulty withstanding the pressure to conform to traditional practice. Lobolo continued to be exchanged on the quiet, and polygamy continued in many house-

holds. However, if a wife objected, she could seek support from OMM and the political structures. She could divorce her husband if he insisted on going ahead with a second marriage. For many women though, divorce is a difficult step, as economic stability and social status are associated with marriage.

Political mobilization has had an initial impact, particularly on the younger generation, but for these customs to be proved redundant is dependent on rural transformation. In the words of one older man who spoke out at a meeting in a village close to Trêz de Fevereiro: "Of course we need more than one wife. The Portuguese only had one wife because they could hire workers. We cannot afford to hire workers. We need to marry more wives."

Agricultural transformation has been slow. The experiences of Trêz de Fevereiro are typical. Its cooperative does not function. Each day, there should be close to 200 members attending. On the days I visited, there were no more than 14.

Among the complex problems that

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have contributed to the failure of the cooperatives throughout Mozambique is the emphasis placed on state farms and the very limited resources that were put into the development of cooperatives.

1983, leaders were outspoken in their self-criticism and all too aware of the urgent need to produce more food. It was decided that the priority for agricultural development would be switched

Without the transformation of the family farming sector, the peasant woman will remain—to quote an official statement—the “most oppressed and exploited woman in Mozambique.” Increased political involvement depends on such a transformation. So does the freeing of women from the heavy burden of productive and domestic labor. Polygamy and lobolo are tightly intertwined with the peasant economy. Political mobilization, new educational opportunities, and the introduction of services are vital, but not enough.

Because of its active women and status as a model, Trés de Fevereiro is one of a small but significant number of villages where women have taken on the challenge of emancipation, and where despite many problems, their aspirations are beginning to be realized. For most of Mozambique, however, the process is in its early stages. Women can be found in new roles from driving tractors on state farms to repairing buses in the towns. But they are still too few. For the majority of women, the daily burden of domestic labor has slowed down more active participation in the development process.

Mozambique set out to achieve something new and inspiring in Africa. That Frelimo has not yet been able to achieve the goals it set for itself should not detract from this attempt. It has provided an important contribution to an understanding of the complex and protracted process of emancipating women. The difficulties and obstacles it has confronted have laid to rest romantic notions that good intentions are sufficient to ensure profound social transformation.

Voices from Trés de Fevereiro reflect changing attitudes. A member of the executive council is proud of her sons. “I am out of the house a lot because of my work. I insist that my sons, who are 12 and 14, do as much in the home as my daughter. Often I come home and find the food prepared by them. Not only do they cook, but they pound the corn and make the fire.”

And an older man who is a member of the people’s assembly says in warm tones: “We never used to value women. Now Frelimo says women must be respected and they must stand up and speak out.” □



Stephanie Urdang

“Introducing technological advances holds the potential to lighten women’s agricultural labor”

Even when it became clear that they were failing, the state farms continued to be the major beneficiaries of government agricultural aid. Few cooperatives were really given the chance to become viable.

At the fourth party congress in April

from state farms to family farming. But no plans were put forward to restructure this sector. This raises a vital question: How will the consolidation of peasant agriculture, which is so firmly based on women’s labor, affect the goal of liberating women?

# Policy Strategies at the End of the Decade

Although the needs of women in developing countries have been brought to the attention of both aid recipients and donors, the mere existence of women's bureaus and "women in development" projects does not necessarily guarantee positive results.

BY KATHLEEN STAUDT

*The present work profile of women: While they represent 50 percent of the world adult population and one-third of the official labor force, they perform nearly two-thirds of all working hours, receive only one-tenth of the world income, and own less than 1 percent of world property.*

—1980 Copenhagen Programme of Action

**T**his often-quoted statement from the conference marking the middle of the United Nations Decade for Women points to the glaring mismatch between the meager benefits women derive from development and the enormous contributions they make to it.

Virtually everywhere in Africa, women are substantial contributors to the development process. Women farm, trade, and work in the paid labor force. Women gather firewood and haul water to their homes. Women bear, feed, and rear children. Women are inte-

grated in development; their decisions and activities affect whether basic family needs will be met. Why, then, the mismatch?

To answer this question, one must look deep into the "bowels of bureaucracy," as government administration is sometimes known. Planners and administrators are responsible for determining how policies will be implemented and who ultimately will benefit from them. They base their decisions on what went on in the past, including in the colonial era; on data, statistics, and analysis which render much of women's work invisible because it is unpaid; on politics; and on personal predilections.

Policy and program decisions are made overwhelmingly by and for men, and are implemented by them, as if women were not partners in development nor the majority of those whom development projects are designed to involve. As development resources increase, women's share becomes progressively smaller, and they lose ground compared with men as the development process goes forward.

My research in Kenya documented women farm managers' limited access to agricultural extension, training, and credit—a phenomenon now apparent in many other African countries as well. In addition, land reforms have generally placed title deeds in husbands' or fa-

thers' names, leaving women in what Ethiopian researcher Zen Tadesse calls a tenant-like relationship to their husbands. Women traders are viewed as ancient anomalies who should be replaced with centralized marketing systems. Education and employment opportunities continue to be disproportionately extended to males. And the bearing and raising of children and other domestic responsibilities are treated as insignificant because they have no monetary value.

Do development resources channeled to men indirectly benefit women? Projects that fail to consider local practices and traditions tend to block any such "trickle down" effect. In some African societies, husbands and wives not only keep separate incomes, but lend each other cash charging interest, sell each other firewood and water, and pay each other for agricultural labor and expertise. Thus, in those areas where cultural traditions foster the separation rather than the pooling of incomes within households, development resources for men do not benefit women or their children.

For example, in a resettlement scheme in East Africa, husbands but not wives were designated as members of a cooperative. The wives did most of the rice production but the men received the pay as "official members." In order

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to secure money needed to buy food, which continued to be a female responsibility just as it was before resettlement, women gradually began to hold back the rice to sell outside official channels, thus undermining the success of the scheme. Only in instances like this, when program goals are dramatically affected, do administrators seem to take note of "women in development" issues. Steps should be taken at the outset of a project to avoid practices like these which clearly take their toll on development and on women.

In recognition of the disadvantages the development process poses for women, many governments have installed monitoring units and advocacy offices in one or various ministries and/or political parties. Such programs must try to penetrate their own, several, or all ministries and maintain contact with women—a constituency of limited political power. The staff of women's programs face a bureaucracy which for decades has been designed to cater to men on economic issues. And what's more, they act with small budgets, limited staff, and little, if any, authority. They must buck powerful cultural attitudes that relegate women to domestic, child-rearing tasks, ignoring their role as economic producers.

Until recently, bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies also suffered from these attitudes. Then in 1973, the U.S. Congress added an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act that called on the Agency for International Development (AID) to integrate women into the development process. The amendment dovetailed with other changes in the agency's mission designed to move programming from a capital to a labor-intensive approach in order to address the basic needs of the rural poor. At the time that the amendment was added, most agency programming toward women was focused on traditional home economics and family planning. Rarely, if ever, did agricultural or employment projects deal with women as economic contributors. Women received only one in 20 of all non-contract agency international training opportunities in 1973.

To comply with the new amendment, a Women in Development (WID) Office was established in the chief administrator's office and later in the policy bureau,

with a staff of several professionals and a meager budget. I spent one year working in this office, in 1979, as social science analyst/program officer.

In WID's early years, its staff reviewed AID project proposals to find ways to include women, but their remarks were not always taken seriously in project review committees. The agency required that the second stage of project design proposals contain a "woman-impact statement," potentially useful for raising project designers' awareness of maldistributive development effects. Often the same paragraph was simply transferred from one project proposal to another, leading one AID official in a North African mission to comment on its great "recyclable" value.

The WID office had no authority to veto projects with negative effects on women or with distorted claims of positive impact. WID has a staff of only two to cover all four regional bureaus of AID. With literally hundreds of project reviews each year, many projects are not monitored at all.

More importantly, though, the WID office did not have resources with which to incorporate strategies for reaching women into the projects developed in AID's technical or regional bureaus. It had to rely instead on the common sense and good will of other agency staff—staff whose administration of agency programs had prompted the WID amendment in the first place. Hiring ceilings imposed on the agency meant that affirmative action never really made a dent on who was making policy; only a tenth of the agency's leadership is female.

Nevertheless, in the mid to late 1970s, other parts of AID were gradually moving forward on women's issues. The WID office helped to disseminate policy and program-oriented research. To broaden the coverage of the small staff in an agency with thousands of employees, certain regional bureaus and field mission staff were given WID responsibilities in addition to other duties, but WID time was limited to as little as 5 percent of work time, and training or expertise were lacking. AID began to hear more about women in development from the staffs of non-governmental organizations and international agen-

cies, university researchers with AID contracts, and women in Africa themselves. Increasing numbers of development activists and researchers across partisan lines accepted the issue as fundamental to development.

As a result, AID's technical and regional bureaus developed small-scale "women's projects" and "women's components" in larger projects, such as rotating credit for women's groups in Burkina Faso, child-care centers in Ghana, and women's extension units and training for female staff in agricultural projects. Yet WID's 1978 *Report to Congress* indicated that the agency was still spending just 2 percent of its budget on women in development activities. Women then represented slightly more than one in eight international trainees, barely above the level at the agency's inception.

Little progress was made in integrating women into agricultural projects, AID's priority sector. I attempted to assess the degree to which specific strategies to include and benefit women were found in past and proposed AID agricultural extension and credit project designs. Nine out of ten designs for projects in Africa and throughout the world did not indicate how women were to be integrated. When they did, it was in terms of traditional home economics and family planning.

Without specific design strategies, administrators in the field are not likely to include women or improve on women's limited access to the benefits of development projects. Only rarely do designs for AID projects specify goals for the number of female participants or require that the distribution of benefits be specified by sex—techniques that encourage administrators to later "prove" women's participation by actually including them.

After almost a decade, the WID effort to integrate women into development plans remained peripheral to AID programs, at great cost both to the success of development efforts and to women. The existence of an office, with its staff furiously scurrying to make some mark on the agency, prompted minor improvements. But it could not do more. With women's programs, herculean accomplishments are expected with extremely limited resources.

In the early 1980s, however, prospects for women in development improved at AID. First, the 1982 WID policy paper eloquently emphasized WID's strong economic rationale and recommended evaluations of each project to document the impact on both men and women. Second, the WID office started to supply technical assistance to AID field missions so that experts could work side by side with existing staff to improve programs for women. Third, AID Administrator Peter McPherson's vocal support for women in development was reinforced with training for senior staff. Finally, the Association for Women in Development was born in 1982, drawing over 800 participants to its first conference in Washington, D.C. This non-governmental professional group brings together researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers involved in development to discuss and to lobby for more resources for women in development.

The WID constituency has coalesced and spread into university and mainstream development activities. WID's 1982 *Report to the Congress* stated that 4 percent of AID's budget was being spent on women in development. Some of these projects are exciting and innovative, such as a women's agricultural school in Rwanda, research on food vendors in Senegal, adult literacy in Zimbabwe, and the National Council of Negro Women's cooperative for raising and marketing pigs in Swaziland. An optimist would praise AID for doubling its WID efforts from 2 to 4 percent of the AID budget.

A realist, however, after assessing WID from its inception, would question why change has been at such a slow pace. If AID's Women in Development Office, acknowledged as the largest and most comprehensive of bilateral and multinational women's assistance organizations in the world, reports this performance record, participants in the UN Decade for Women conference should not be surprised about grim progress reports from elsewhere.

Women's bureaus, with their limited resources and staff, have the gargantuan task of reversing discriminatory attitudes and practices that are deeply imbedded throughout government. Typically placed in a social services ministry,

they are saddled with a welfarist label to which other branches of government neither logically nor structurally relate. Some countries have only a "women's desk," which in some cases means quite literally that a desk is moved into a vacant room.

The UN has long recommended the establishment of "national machineries" for the advancement of women, including ministries, departments, bureaus, commissions, councils, political organs, and nongovernmental organizations. A booklet put out by the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in 1980 notes that national machineries for women exist in 41 African countries and describes diverse examples.

In Ghana, both government officials and private citizens form the membership of the National Council on Women and Development, which was established in 1975. The council collects data on women and reports its findings to government, along with recommendations on a wide variety of policies and programs that affect women. The council has organized training programs, worked with women to form small-scale industry groups, and developed a revolving loan fund for women's groups.

In Kenya, the National Council for Women, operating since 1964 to coordinate women's organizations, works with the women's bureau in the Ministry of Housing and Social Services. It has spearheaded the "Save the Land



NOBU ARAKAWA

Food vendor in Lomé: "Rarely did agricultural or employment projects deal with women as economic contributors"

Harambee" tree planting program, as well as water projects. Together with the women's bureau, it supports women's group projects, and with the Ministry of Health, provides information on maternal/child health programs and family planning.

Still, these machineries confront major constraints. After analyzing information supplied by 79 countries, UN consultant Oki Ooko Ombaka concludes that these bureaucracies accomplish data collection and advocacy, but that women are "still a marginal consideration in development strategies." The women's bureaus tend to be under-budgeted and under-staffed, and located in insignificant ministries.

Along with the women's calls for "integration" or non-discrimination comes the implied threat of redistribution. Program monies, staff positions, and men's projects would necessarily be trans-

formed. Any redistributive measures mean conflict between population groups. Between men and women, it generally implies redistribution within the household, which is potentially threatening to male authority. Moreover, government activities which touch the household or family are considered illegitimate, affecting a sacred part of people's lives. Finally, the redistribution of resources between men and women gets tied up in the subtle interaction of male-female conflict in large administrative hierarchies where men dominate.

While working in AID's WID office, I encountered much resistance to the concept of women in development. For example, WID is perceived as social engineering and somehow different from family planning, the encouragement of private investment, foreign assistance as a whole, or for that matter, channel-

ing resources to men. WID is denigrated as "the export of women's lib," as if supported solely in the U.S. and ungrounded in the reality of the societies in which AID operates.

The WID concept is also perceived as anti-family. One hears the comment, "I'm not interested in WID; I'm interested in families," as if these were somehow mutually exclusive. AID staff insert their personal feelings and experiences with wives, mothers, and daughters into discussions on women in development. The issue of integrating women in development is trivialized, as if joking could reduce discomfort with the idea. People confuse their reaction to WID experts with their reaction to the WID concept. Whether "abrasive," "attractive," or "too amenable," their behavior or appearance is confused with the substance of the issue. No other new policy advocated inside the agency is perceived in such personal terms.

"... Politics cannot and should not be avoided when dealing with development," writes Ruth Kethlapile Motsete, author of a UN analysis of women's organizations in Botswana. Ultimately, the transformation of administrators' views of women in development issues is a political process, involving bureaucratic and constituency politics.

Already, substantial policy, program, and project-oriented research has been completed. It now remains for that research to be "translated" for development practitioners. Special training will deepen the knowledge of and commitment to women in development and thereby alleviate heavy burdens on women's program offices. The Population Council has taken a lead role in developing such practical materials for development planners, including several monographs on Nigeria and Kenya. In addition, the East and Southern Africa Management Institute in Arusha, Tanzania, offers two courses a year on development planning that focus on African women for participants from government and non-governmental and international organizations in that region. Together, these newly trained personnel can revise internal procedures in all areas of development to give routine attention to women in development.

Even more important, the groups that advocate for women in develop-



Margaret A. Novick

**Angolan family: "The bearing and raising of children and other domestic responsibilities are treated as insignificant because they have no monetary value"**

ment must be strong and coherent as well as integrated into many other constituencies for development issues, such as groups concerned with hunger or those with a religious orientation. Such pressure groups determine whether training programs or women's bureaus exist, their budget levels, and the priority placed on the issue for other programs, ministries, and the rest of

government. Besides, these groups remind administrators in other parts of government of their responsibility to integrate women into projects and policies, thereby relieving sparsely staffed women's programs.

On the surface, the sprouting of so many women's programs appears to have gone far in addressing the problem. Yet overall government has barely

budgeted, although such programs have been saddled with high expectations and tremendous responsibilities. 1985 marks the end of the decade, but it is only the beginning of efforts to penetrate the "bowels of bureaucracy" in ways that make government more responsive to women and ultimately accountable to its female as well as male citizens. □

## The African Diaspora

Since its founding 72 years ago, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. has participated in a number of international endeavors. Recent activities have included tours of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean; the construction and maintenance of a maternity wing at a hospital in Thika, Kenya; collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) in funding the first conference of women from East African countries; and provision of books for libraries in West African countries.

In addition to its projects in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, the sorority, with its 712 chapters in the U.S. and Europe, announced the Delta Internationale African Diaspora project in October 1984. An advisory committee of scholars, educators, foreign service professionals, organization leaders, local political figures, members of Congress, and the media has been assembled to ensure that the program will have the broadest possible impact.

Addressing a World Conference of Mayors meeting in September 1984, I explained Delta's involvement in public service across our country. The mayors, representing cities from Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, the Caribbean, and the U.S., were also informed of our commitment to increasing international awareness of the problems of racial discrimination, hunger, poverty, child care, health services, and education—problems endemic throughout the world.

It was clear at the close of this meeting that black Americans, by experiences and political involvement, can and must play a major role in focusing attention on the injustices faced by black people in the U.S. and abroad. This can be done by lobbying for favorable legislation at the local, state, and national levels.

Through the Delta Internationale and the African Dias-

pora, we have outlined a program consisting of three major objectives: to foster awareness of the meaning of the diaspora and the impact of the dispersion of Africans throughout the world; to work toward the interaction of black youth throughout the world; and to provide opportunities for international exchanges through travel, study, workshops, and cultural events.

Targeted for immediate implementation are the following: work with community educational systems, including colleges and universities, to improve the quality and effectiveness of African studies programs on all levels; identification of foundations to provide fellowships and grants in support of African programs; development of media lists as part of an effort to encourage editors and news directors to increase news coverage of African affairs; work with concerned religious and community action groups; networking with other organizations, such as Africare and TransAfrica; involvement with immediate issues confronting the African continent such as drought and famine, and efforts to influence U.S. policy toward apartheid South Africa; and encouragement of Delta members at the local and national levels to travel and study the black experience throughout the world.

As an organization, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority does not advocate a "back-to-Africa" movement. Rather through our programs—education and involvement in black life and struggles world-wide—we support a journey of knowledge and pride in our heritage through the discovery of black contributions to world civilization. □

—Hortense Canady  
President, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

# The African Group: A New Political Realism?

The worsening economic plight of many African nations overshadowed the 1984 United Nations General Assembly session. Yet the continent's troubles may have contributed to building a new spirit of unity and pragmatism among Africa's spokesmen in New York.

BY JOHN DE ST. JORRE

For more than two decades, the United Nations has been many things to Africa: an international forum, a protector, a friendly aid and service organization, and a political symbol of immense importance. The UN remains all of those things today, but events in the continent and elsewhere have produced changes in Africa's relationship with the world body, changes in how the Africans relate to other groups and individuals, and changes in the way they relate to each other.

Africa's history is studded with powerful, often poignant images. Even before the UN was founded in 1945, Africans looked to world organizations for succor. Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, appealed to the world on the floor of the League of Nations, the UN's ill-fated predecessor, against the rape of his country by Mussolini's Italy in the 1930s. Patrice Lumumba, the Congo's first prime minister, turned to the UN when his country began to fall apart

*John de St. Jorre, a former Africa correspondent for the London Observer and author of several books on Africa, writes frequently on African affairs.*

within weeks of independence in 1960. Namibia, first a League of Nations' and later a UN ward, still looks to the glass tower on the East River for salvation.

"The year of Africa" was how the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, summed up the 1984 United Nations General Assembly session. Implicit in its judgment was a compliment and a critique, a recognition of Africa's maturity and diplomatic skills and a foreboding of Orwellian doom. Africa's prominence in the last General Assembly sprang not only from its leadership (Paul Lusaka of Zambia was the Assembly's president) and its conduct during the session, but also from the dire and deepening economic crisis that has struck the continent.

For once, a strong consensus produced a resolution on the critical economic situation in Africa that was devoid of polemics and apportionment of blame. The declaration, which took nearly a month to draft, concentrated on highlighting the crucial issues and setting up a mechanism, through the Secretary-General, to put flesh on the resolution's bones. It stressed the urgency of feeding 150 million people facing starvation in Africa, as well as the needs to make the continent self-sufficient in food

production and to make adjustments in fragile economies afflicted by structural problems.

There were no references to colonialism, no criticism of Western powers, nor calls for a new economic order. Indeed, the Africans accepted the "primary responsibility" in addressing the current crisis and for their own economic development. The Africans' self-examinatory mood and the resolution itself were highly praised by other participants and observers of the UN process. One top Western diplomat unequivocally called the resolution "the most important event" of the General Assembly.

This somber declaration showed Africa at its best: reflective, realistic, conciliatory, united. Yet, only a few months earlier, during the annual meeting of the UN's Economic and Social Council in Geneva, a similar resolution, but one burdened with much rhetorical baggage, had failed, producing bad feeling all around.

There is no doubt now that the depressing situation in Africa has been translated into a more moderate, thoughtful, and unified mood among the Africans in New York. Indeed, there is an irony in contrasting that mood with

lia remained obdurate. Finally, both Somalia and Ethiopia were prevailed upon to withdraw.

Unfortunately, the East Africans found themselves confronted with another conflict, this time between Comoros and Madagascar. Comoros, under the rotation rule, was the rightful candidate, but it had no mission or permanent representative in New York. (There were rumors that the Saudis were prepared to buy a building for Comoros to block more radical Madagascar.)

Finally, the East Africa sub-group put forward Madagascar as its candidate, which was duly endorsed by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of dirty linen had been washed in public. "We have always laughed at others for regional divisions," said one African ambassador, "but now everyone was laughing at us."

The strict rotational system poses a problem for the small, poorer states which have neither the financial resources nor the manpower to fill important positions when their turn arrives. Moreover, most African countries prefer to have the strongest, strictly non-aligned states representing them as a group in the Security Council—nations that will stand up to the big powers wielding the veto. But the rotation system inevitably places weak and malleable countries on the Security Council for much of the time.

A closer look exposes the fragility of African unity, in spite of the fact that the group is undoubtedly more united at the UN than at home. The francophones, for example, are much more loyal to their former colonial master than the anglophones; indeed, the latter appear to take a positive delight in baiting the old imperial lion. The fact that the North Africans and Somalia belong to the Arab League introduces another element of "outside" influence. The close relationships of some African states with the two superpowers produce additional tensions. Divisive issues, such as the Western Sahara, and maverick states (Libya) also have a disruptive impact on the otherwise relatively orderly world of the Africans at the UN.

The one issue that remains a clarion call to rhetorical unity and (more or less) unified action is South Africa. At the UN, Africa follows the guidelines laid

down by the OAU which delegates policy-making to the frontline states. The frontline includes all the states in the southern Africa sub-group, plus Angola from the central group and Tanzania from the East Africa section. The main southern African nationalist movements—the South West Africa People's Organization, the African National Congress, and the Pan Africanist Congress—are part of the Africa group at the UN and participate in all its deliberations. But even here there is friction, in the form of the long-standing interne-cine rivalry between the ANC and PAC.

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Once very active, the frontline group seems to have become more subdued during the last year, partly because of the Nkomati Accord between Mozambique and South Africa and the continuing American-brokered negotiations between Angola and South Africa, but also because of more pressing problems at home for most of the frontline countries. The number of frontline meetings at the UN has dramatically declined and the entire sub-group has lost much of its original cohesion. But it remains the OAU's policy-making arm in the critical arena of Namibia and South Africa.

The OAU secretariat in New York not only tries to order African representation at the political level, but also endeavors to ensure that Africa receives its fair share of posts in the UN Secretariat and the UN agencies. While the number of Africans in senior positions has increased over the years, most Africans are critical of the slow pace of progress and stress that their representation as a regional group lacks clout in the upper reaches of the UN system.

Abdulrahim Farah, under secretary-general for special affairs and a former representative of Somalia at the UN, is the highest ranking African in the Secretariat. The Africans also have Amadou

M'Bow, the controversial head of Unesco, and some other senior officials, but they are currently trying to correct what they see as an imbalance by putting forward candidates for the top jobs in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. They will probably end up with one, but not both of these agency posts.

Most Africans find the present secretary-general, Javier Perez de Cuellar, in whose domain many of these top posts lie, less sympathetic than his predecessor, Kurt Waldheim. The end of Perez de Cuellar's term in 1986 is already in some Africans' sights. They believe the time has come for the UN's first African secretary-general and there is already speculation about a suitable African candidate. The names of Olara Otunnu of Uganda and Paul Lusaka of Zambia have been mentioned as possible candidates. But the next election is still almost two years away, and Perez de Cuellar, although saying he will not seek a second term, has not ruled out accepting one if he is drafted.

African states still send their best talent to the UN, both to represent themselves and to staff positions in the organization itself. It is a fact of life that, by and large, the caliber of African diplomats at the UN is considerably higher than that in Washington. And many of Africa's stars glow more brightly in their domestic firmaments after they return home.

There has, though, been a noticeable change in the kind of individual who is now sent to New York from Africa. In the old days, it was often a well-known political figure who had been prominent in the independence struggle and was close to his leader. (Alex Quaison-Sackey of Ghana was the prototype.) Today, it is more common to see the professional diplomats in residence, highly educated and seasoned bureaucrats.

Whether this represents an improvement or a decline depends upon to whom you talk. The older guard says passion and idealism have been lost; the younger generation believes there has been a gain in intellectual quality, negotiating skills, and actual results. But then times have changed too: The heady



the divisiveness that continues to afflict the African nations back home. For, while 1984 produced the General Assembly declaration, it was also the year that witnessed Morocco walking out of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the first time in the 21-year history of the body that a member actually quit.

But then the African group has always managed to be relatively cohesive, more so perhaps than any other group at the UN, if one discounts the iron discipline of the Eastern European bloc. This seems true despite Africa's great numbers (with 50 states it is by far the largest of the UN's five regional groupings), and its great diversity—Arabs and Africans, francophones, anglophones, and lusophones, its island states in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, its large nations and its microscopic ones.

The ability to find a consensus on most issues of importance to the continent has long been a source of pride to Africa and a point of envy for some other members of the UN. Praise has even come from an unexpected quarter: "The Africans are extremely effective at UN politics," Jeane Kirkpatrick, the former United States representative to the UN, commented not long ago. "They always agree on common candidates [for UN committees and so on]. It is a marvellously civilized system."

African cohesion, especially in General Assembly affairs, means that the continent, provided it stays together, can often swing things its way because it holds one-third of the total vote. It also means its position is given due weight in the non-aligned group. Africa, however, is far less important in the Security Council where each region has an allotted number of seats and where the vetoes of the US, USSR, Britain, France, and China are all-powerful.

There are a number of reasons for African cohesion at the UN. The continent does possess a degree of geographical unity that the Asian group, for example, lacks (Asia reaches from Cyprus to Mongolia, from Iran to Japan). There is also a measure of historical solidarity since most African countries have passed through a phase of European colonialism and became independent at roughly the same time. There is also the

powerful common interest virtually all African states share in removing the last remnant of colonialism from the continent by securing Namibia's independence, and in opposing South Africa's racially discriminatory apartheid system.

Of all the regional groups, the Africans have managed best to transpose the structure, power, and meaning of their continental mechanism, the Organization of African Unity, from its indigenous terrain to New York. While it is true that the Arabs have an Arab League office at the UN, and the West Europeans have a European Economic Community representative here, (the Organization of American States, the umbrella body for Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States, has

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its headquarters in Washington), none of these compare with the OAU's physical and political presence at the United Nations.

The OAU has a relatively large and bilingually (English and French) staffed office in New York headed by an executive secretary, Oumarou Youssoufou, a seasoned diplomat from Niger who has represented his country in Addis Ababa and at the United Nations. The office was established in 1963, the same year that the OAU was born, and will be moving into its own brownstone premises this year.

The key to African harmony—most of the time—is the system that has been devised for selecting countries to sit on UN committees and occupy other positions. Sequential rotation, regardless of the size of the country, is the cardinal principle. The chairman of the Africa group, for example, changes every month, each nation taking its turn.

At the beginning of each year, the OAU Secretariat sends a list of vacant posts to all the members of the Africa

group, soliciting candidates. For convenience, Africa is subdivided into five regions—west, central, east, southern, and northern.

Each sub-region is represented on a body called the "Candidatures Committee" which makes the final decisions on the candidate that will be put forward for each vacancy. Most of the time, this system—unique in the UN—works, even when it cuts across the grain of regional rivalries. For instance, Egypt was chosen by the African group to be one of its three members on the Security Council for 1984-85, in the face of bitter hostility from some of the other "Arab" Africans and the entire Arab League. Egypt got the seat because, the OAU argued, it was simply Egypt's turn.

There are times, however, when someone throws a wrench into the works. In 1978, feeling its strength under a military government and the oil boom, Nigeria opposed the OAU-backed candidacy of Niger to the Security Council and finally won. That action is still resented by many African states and set a disturbing precedent that was repeated when Ethiopia and Somalia clashed for a Security Council seat last December.

The struggle between these ancient and bitter enemies reveals both the weaknesses and the strengths of the African system at the UN. It was the East African sub-regional group's turn to send someone to the Security Council and three candidates—Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Somalia—presented themselves. The Candidatures Committee found that Tanzania had served most recently of the three and, operating by the same rule of rotation, suggested Ethiopia serve on the Council. Somalia "reserved its position," a formula that usually indicates unhappiness but tacit agreement not to oppose the OAU's choice. This time, however, Somalia took action and lobbied energetically for the position. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia, among others outside the African group, supported Somalia's bid. The struggle went to the floor of the General Assembly, and thus beyond the direct control of the Africans, and Somalia got 70 votes, producing a deadlock. The African group appealed to the sub-regional East Africa bloc to negotiate, but Soma-

lia remained obdurate. Finally, both Somalia and Ethiopia were prevailed upon to withdraw.

Unfortunately, the East Africans found themselves confronted with another conflict, this time between Comoros and Madagascar. Comoros, under the rotation rule, was the rightful candidate, but it had no mission or permanent representative in New York. (There were rumors that the Saudis were prepared to buy a building for Comoros to block more radical Madagascar.)

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Whether this represents an improvement or a decline depends upon to whom you talk. The older guard says passion and idealism have been lost; the younger generation believes there has been a gain in intellectual quality, negotiating skills, and actual results. But then times have changed too: The heady

days of early independence have been replaced by the harsh realities of trying to run poor, underdeveloped countries. What is unchanged, however, is the importance that African governments continue to attach to their voice at the UN.

There is now a great deal of talk about a basic change in the "African view" at the UN. Africa, the thesis goes, has become more "moderate." "There is less dominance of the group by a few radicals," says Ambassador Alan Keyes, U.S. representative to the UN Economic and Social Council. "A broader spectrum of Africans now plays a more active role." Jeane Kirkpatrick, the former US representative, has gone further, describing the phenomenon as "the revolt of the moderates."

The Reagan administration attributes this to the severe economic problems that most African states are experiencing and to its own tougher tactics at the UN where every anti-U.S. move is combated and where, quite often, reprisals are taken at the bilateral level. In testimony to Congress, Ambassador Kirkpatrick said: "We need to communicate to nations that their votes, their attitudes, and their actions inside the UN system inevitably must have consequences for their relationship outside the UN system."

This is not the first time that the U.S. has linked the Africans' behavior at the UN with consequences back home. In the mid-1970s, Daniel Patrick Moynihan was a belligerent figure at the head of the U.S. delegation and U.S. embassies in Africa were instructed to relay that belligerence to their host governments. But now American pressure is more relentless, and the Africans are weaker.

"American tactics are those of the zap squad," says Donald McHenry, the United States permanent representative in the latter part of the Carter administration. "If you don't like what people are doing, you hit them over the head. There is no dialogue between the U.S. and the Africans at the UN today. It's a monologue."

Although Ambassador Keyes and others at the U.S. mission feel they have established a reasonably successful working relationship with the Africans, this is not, on the whole, the African view. "We resent the United States'

approach," says James Gbeho, Ghana's permanent representative, "because it undermines the concept of sovereignty and takes us back 25 years when might was seen as right. We single out the U.S. and Israel in anti-South African resolutions for good reason—they both actively support Pretoria."

There is no doubt, however, that U.S. tactics have paid off in having offensive clauses removed from General Assembly resolutions. The Africans have been put at a further disadvantage by the slow pace of progress on Namibia and the emergence of South Africa as a regional superpower, first by squeezing its neighbors, then by making peace

with them. The central role of American diplomacy in the Namibian negotiations—and the sidelining of the Western Contact Group (Britain, Canada, France, West Germany, and the United States)—has also weakened the Africans' bargaining position.

But are the Africans really more moderate? "The United States seems to define a 'moderate' as someone who supports it," says Ambassador Gbeho. "The African states are under a lot of pressure these days, but none of this changes their basic philosophies. We are very conscious of our independence, our non-aligned principles, and our feelings about Namibia and South Africa." □

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## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I read your series of articles on the Maghreb with great interest and would like to congratulate your contributors on an excellent job.

There seems to be one small error on page 78 ("Maghreb Policy in Disarray," by Robert A. Manning and Jennifer Noyon, November-December 1984) where it is stated that military spending now consumes 40 percent of the Moroccan budget, after stating that the war is costing \$1 million a day.

The official 1985 budget estimates total \$5.36 billion, of which defense takes \$725 million (13 percent). Defense includes the Royal Armed Forces of 140,000 men, the gendarmerie of 22,000 men, auxiliary forces of 18,000 men, and the police of 46,000 men.

Taken all together, this would work out at about \$2 million a day, so it is probably correct to say that the war itself is costing \$1 million a day. But that amount cannot equal 40 percent of the budget (\$2.144 billion), which would work out to something like \$6 million a day being spent on the war.

Since one of the main arguments put forward by the authors of the article is that the economy could collapse, that

the cost of the war could undermine Hassan's stability, etc., the figures quoted tend to give the impression that doom is just around the corner.

S.O. Hughes  
Rabat, Morocco

To the Editor:

I wish to congratulate you and all those associated with your magazine for consistently putting out such a fine product. I savor each copy because not only does it explore several important issues, but it covers them clearly and in depth from various viewpoints.

I find the quality of the writing to be consistently outstanding and only occasionally are the biases of the authors evident.

Yours is one of the few magazines that I read from cover to cover and then save for future reference. I am sure that many of your other subscribers feel them same way. Please continue your good work.

Doug Seidman  
New York, New York

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Erratum: On page 4, paragraph 4 of Hugh Robert's article, "Algeria: Thirty Years After the Revolution," (November-December 1984), "... its corresponding feudal structures..." should have read "... its corresponding tribal structures..." We regret the error.

# Books

## Voices from South Africa

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June Goodwin, *Cry Amandla! South African Women and the Question of Power*, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1984, 328 pp., \$22.50 cloth, \$11.50 paper.

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June Goodwin uses a series of interviews with women across race-polarized South Africa to give us an unusual insight into its society. She met liberal and conservative white ladies on manicured lawns in leafy suburbs, where homilies and banalities were dispensed with the tea and cookies. She first talked to her friend, black activist Thenjie Mtintso, in a dimly lit room where the tapped phone was smothered with cushions and the curtains drawn against the police.

Goodwin moved adroitly and courageously between black and white societies during her time in South Africa, from June 1976 to January 1979, when she was a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*. While other correspondents were focusing on South African riots and the Rhodesian war, she concentrated on penetrating beneath the surface of South African society, a difficult and potentially dangerous task.

She writes: "I sometimes felt almost schizophrenic in South Africa, shuttling from the black society to the white, listening to the people who should be talking to one another, coming to understand why blacks will turn more and more to the gun, and growing aware that some of the whites I talked with might eventually be the targets."

The conversations cast light, but give

little hope that a racial conflagration in South Africa will be averted, in spite of the fact that these are, in the South African context, the voices of reason. On the white side, there are no conversations with members of right-wing Afrikaner groups nor with any common or garden bigots, of which there are plenty in evidence. On the black side, Goodwin did not talk to activists more extremist than her friend Thenjie who, for most of the book, is a follower of the late Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement. Goodwin says that some Afrikaners would not agree to be interviewed in English. Those she did see spoke only on the understanding that the conversation would be about Christianity, a subject which inevitably spilled over into the race issue.

For journalists who have tried to pierce Afrikaner bureaucracy in South Africa, the most amazing interview is with a man, the former chief interrogator at Johannesburg's John Vorster Square police headquarters, venue of many suspicious suicides by hitherto non-suicidal prisoners.

Goodwin knew of Arthur Benoni Cronwright because he had interrogated and tortured two of her friends, one black and one white, before they fled the country. She obtained the interview by asking to discuss Cronwright's brand of born-again Christianity to which he had tried to convert a number of his black prisoners.

She was forbidden to take notes during the hour-long conversation during which she asked how a Christian could justify killing. Captain Cronwright replied: "The Bible says you can kill. The Bible says you must drive Satan out by force, you must destroy Satan."

Asked about Steve Biko's death at the hands of the security police, he said he did not believe what he read in the paper, add-

ing: "I don't believe what people say. I only believe what I hear from God."

In a postscript, Goodwin noted that Cronwright, now a major, was in charge of the interrogation of trade union leader Neil Aggett, the first white to die under security police detention in February 1982.

Cronwright provides the book's most extreme example of the Afrikaner vision of the dominance of blacks as a God-sent mission. Another version comes from Gabrielle Malan, whose husband is a minister in the largest of South Africa's three Dutch Reformed churches and a member of the Broederbond.

Goodwin interviewed her in a prosperous Johannesburg suburb where the deeply religious lady told her she believed the division of people into groups was God's way of averting human conflict.

"Apartheid is a geographical necessity because of city life and the way we're living today. I wouldn't make too much of the differences," she said. Mrs. Malan had an interesting solution to the problem of black workers who officially live in tribal homelands but have to come to white-designated cities to work.

"The best would be to do what they do in Japan—move people with bullet trains into the working areas by day and take them back to their homes at night. I don't see why this country can't do it; we've got the money. But, of course, this is a large country, so it would be more difficult. But this would be the ideal thing."

Then there is Freda Van Rooyen, founder of the Kontak Organization, meant to liberalize Afrikaner women. She gushed: "And the visit to Soweto was the most exhilarating experience I've had in the past two years. We went to a swimming pool. We saw the children really enjoy swimming. My friend said 'You know, for the

first time in my life, I have the feeling it must be nice and enjoyable to be poor.'"

Also heard is the voice of Helen Suzman, veteran opponent of apartheid and a member of South Africa's parliament since 1953. As Goodwin points out, Suzman is a conservative by Western standards, but is considered a radical by many South African whites. Even this resilient lady gloomily concludes that South Africa's future holds a prolonged guerrilla war, along the lines of Zimbabwe.

Goodwin says the heroine of the book is Thenjie Mtintso whom she first met in 1977, shortly after Mtintso was "banned" by the authorities. She had a series of long discussions with the black activist in between harrowing periods of detention. Mtintso describes the last detention in which she was frequently beaten and made to stand in one position for four days while interrogators working in shifts questioned her.

She said: "When interrogation became more serious, their assault was systematic. They made me stand next to the wall, and the man next to me just hit my head on the wall like a ball, a tennis ball. At the end of three hours, my head, I could feel it growing."

At the end of the book Thenjie, threatened with re-arrest, flees to Lesotho with her nine-year-old son Lumumba and joins the African National Congress to align herself with the armed struggle against South Africa's white-minority rule. She told Goodwin: "After Soweto, after Mapetla Mohapi was killed, after Biko was killed, after my last detention, my belief in a non-violent victory lost all validity."

Thenjie is no longer in Lesotho. She apparently fled after a South African raid. Goodwin doesn't know where she is now.

Goodwin was with the Peace Corps in Ethiopia from 1964-1966 and had worked in many other African countries as a journalist before she went to South Africa. Visiting Soweto for the first time, she describes herself as stunned by "hatred, the tension and fear between black and white people."

"Amandla" means power which she says is the symbol of a new black militancy which has not died out since it surfaced in 1976, and which threatens the white power structure of apartheid.

Michael Hughes  
New York, New York

Editor's Note: *Cry Amandla!* was banned by the South African authorities on September 1, 1984.

## An Indictment of the Single Party System

Laurent Gbagbo, *Côte-d'Ivoire: Pour une alternative démocratique*, Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1983, 180 pp., FF 70.

In February 1982, the political bureau of Ivory Coast's ruling single party explained why it had been obliged to close down the national university, expel the students from their dormitories, withhold their scholarships, and dissolve the faculty's trade union. The obvious reason was that students and faculty had gone on strike, but the underlying explanation was "the manipulation of the students by a handful of professors, always the same ones and we know who they they are."

The professor most frequently named in the party communique was Laurent Gbagbo, clearly the ring-leader of the dissidents as far as the government was concerned. At the time, Gbagbo held a research appointment and was director of the Institute of African History, Art, and Archeology at the University of Abidjan. He was indeed well-known to the ruling authorities because twice before they had arrested him for his political views. The political bureau document characterized Gbagbo as a troublemaker, smeared the opposition generally with the charge that they "received their orders and directives from abroad," and concluded triumphantly that the forces of order had intervened to foil the "sorcerer's apprentices" from achieving their "unavowable political ends" (all quotes are from the communique as published in the official party newspaper, *Fraternité-Hebdo*, #1191, February 19, 1982). Gbagbo was given no opportunity to respond publicly.

The episode was typical of political practice in Ivory Coast. There is substantial opposition to the regime of President Houphouët-Boigny, but very little opportunity to express it. Over his 24 years in power, Houphouët has monopolized the means of political expression. In order to "avow" his political ideals, Gbagbo had to leave Ivory Coast. His case "for a democratic alternative" has recently been published in France. It is at once a personal statement and an important contribution to the debate over the "Ivorian miracle."

Gbagbo introduces his theme with a well-chosen epigraph: "There is something more odious than slavery: that is to have slaves and to call them citizens." The quote is from Diderot, but the citation is from Ouezin Coulibaly, the founder of the

teachers' union in colonial Ivory Coast, who recalled these words during a debate in the French National Assembly in 1949. Coulibaly was a political associate of Houphouët-Boigny during the heroic period of postwar nationalist mobilization. He died in 1958 about the time that Houphouët was clamping down on autonomous political activity, notably by banning the small Ivorian party that favored immediate independence from France. The establishment of a single party regime was for Gbagbo the debasement of citizenship into a form of slavery. "I am convinced," he writes, "that in de-personalizing people, the single party creates the psychological and cultural conditions for the perpetuation of underdevelopment."

Most fundamentally then, Gbagbo's book addresses an issue that Africans and Africanists have confronted over the past 25 years: Can a single party be democratic? This, moreover, was precisely the question that triggered the events that led Gbagbo to write the book. A scheduled debate on this topic drew such an impassioned throng that the lecture hall could not accommodate the audience. When the organizers sought to move to another hall, tempers flared, the amphitheater was damaged, and the event was abruptly canceled. Subsequently, Gbagbo agreed to lecture on "Youth and Politics," a subject which the government found sufficiently inflammatory to prohibit in university facilities. This second cancellation, coupled with rumors of Gbagbo's arrest, sparked the strike in February 1982.

The book is thus grounded in recent political turmoil in Ivory Coast. It constitutes a clear statement of what the opposition thinks is wrong with Houphouët's system of personal rule. It is, not surprisingly, an angry work. But this anger reflects a political force which is bottled up in the country. Even more than anger, however, the book expresses indignation about the means that Houphouët has employed to govern his fellow citizens.

Gbagbo does not hesitate to call Houphouët a dictator. He argues that the president has resorted to a classic strategy of tyrants: the fabrication of conspiracies. He analyzes the alleged plots of 1959 and 1963, arguing that the evidence suggests a purge much more than a coup against Houphouët. Having acquired a copy of the secret indictment of the 1963 "plotters," Gbagbo shows just how flimsy the charges were. All the more so was the eviction of Vice-Premier J. B. Mockey in 1959 against whom the charge was betrayal by fetishism! Gbagbo ridicules the notion of conspirators "preparing to mount

an assault upon the Republic with poisoned arrows!" But beyond the ridicule lies his own indictment of Houphouët's governance through arbitrary arrest, "routinized repression and everyday fear."

Houphouët actually acknowledged in 1980 that there had never been a conspiracy. He blamed the director of internal security for having misled him, a declaration which Gbagbo characterizes as "an insult to the Ivorian people." Gbagbo holds Houphouët accountable for a system in which denunciation, character assassination, ethnic slurs, and foreign scapegoating were the means of rule. He finds Houphouët responsible for the elementary reason that he suppressed the free political expression that alone can hold rulers accountable.

Gbagbo thus places his work essentially in the tradition of political liberty. He does devote some criticism as well to the government's economic policies, which are in fact the main source of discontent in the country. Ivory Coast has prospered since independence, but the issue here is distributive policy. Gbagbo shows how the government *Caisse de Stabilisation* has soaked up most of the profits from cocoa and coffee exports, and redistributed them to the elite in various ways. He publishes, for example, a housing authority document that reveals the monthly rental payments to members of the Houphouët family for diverse real estate properties owned in Yamoussoukro. The author calls for a variety of reforms in economic and social policy, but most fundamentally, he calls for the right to political opposition.

Gbagbo deplores a system that has replaced the concept of citizenship with reliance upon "the benevolence of the 'Father of the Nation.'" As he was writing this book in the spring of 1983, a second major strike erupted. This time secondary school teachers around the nation went out in protest against government measures. As the protest spread to other sectors, Houphouët went on television to make a bizarre speech of self-justification. Recognizing that abuse of power was the real issue, Houphouët delivered a rambling almost incoherent account of his personal wealth, his family ties, and odd financial transactions.

He sought to defend the enormous sums poured into his birthplace of Yamoussoukro as private funds, declaring that "I wanted to show what an Africa can do for his country when he has the means." He went on to respond to critics of mysterious government expenditures abroad: "I have been as you know in the French government; I know what one should do abroad

and we do it. . . And people who do not know to what use the money was put scream: 'Robber, they are robbers.' How is that? You who had nothing, but whom my policies have lifted out of a hole, you are now going to treat me as a thief?" (*Fraternité-Matin*, April 27, 1983.) For many Ivorians the speech raised questions about the state of mind of the aging leader.

For Gbagbo, the issue is not the leader's competence but rather the very character of autocratic rule. His book is ultimately a double "témoignage," not only an account of why he has opposed Houphouët's sys-

tem, but a personal testimony to his faith in democratic politics. "Democracy confers responsibility," he writes, "whereas dictatorship breeds subservience." No doubt Gbagbo is a rebel, but where the political bureau saw devious manipulation, his readers are likely to see a citizen committed to the belief that "liberty is the most potent lever of economic development." He argues eloquently that the Ivory Coast is ready for that liberty.

Robert A. Mortimer  
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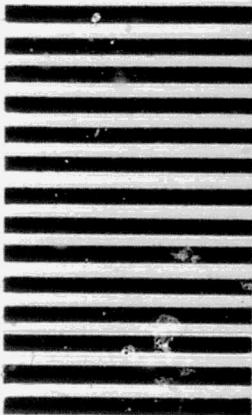
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