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Chari Tocinka		
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TANZANIAN WOMEN CONFRONT THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Marjorie Mbilinyi

The example of women in Tanzania is taken to illustrate their place in African society over time and their response to conditions which confront them today. Underdevelopment of the national economy and the class formation were inherited from the pre-colonial and colonial periods and are perpetuated by dependence on external forces. These have enhanced and continue to enhance restrictions for women. Full-scale capital accumulation in the hands of the people and a programme of rural industrialisation will provide the only kind of institutional framework within which the emancipation of women will be possible.

IDLE speculation about "the future" is a luxury that women of Africa cannot afford. We are engaged in three struggles at the same time: the struggles against international imperialism, against class exploitation within our own nations, and against exploitative sexist social relationships. These struggles are inter-related, but not identical.

However, it is difficult to mobilise ourselves without some picture of what the future could be like. Effective long-range and short-range action depend upon correct analysis of the historical context in which we are placed. We need to study the nature of our societies today (its economy, its class structure, and other social, cultural and political factors), and their historical development. Out of this kind of analysis we then can project the probable direction in which our society is headed, and outline some of the steps necessary to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. In Tanzania, our long-range goals are socialism and self-reliance, to which we will add full human equality for men and women.

The pre-colonial inheritance

In the pre-colonial economy the family and kinship units which owned or controlled the use of land varied as to exactly how self-contained they were. In some East African societies, all the needs of the household were produced by

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that household. In contrast, many West African households were not so self-contained, and extensive marketing relationships developed within and between different societies. Although in most areas men handled the long-distance trade routes, women were predominant in the local marketing. Under these circumstances women's economic autonomy naturally rose.

Land tenure in Africa has been vested in men, whether the society was matrilineal or patrilineal.¹ As a result, women received their rights to use land for agricultural production through their relationship to a man. Land was and is the most fundamental natural resource for agricultural-based economies; control over land provides a future basis for power and wealth accumulation.

A division of labour according to sex existed in all African societies. Wherever the husband helped in food-crop production, his duties tended to be the heavy work. Women were left with the more constant, routine chores such as weeding, planting, harvesting, and scaring off birds. All domestic duties related to housekeeping, child care, and food processing and preparation were the responsibility of the woman. A man whose wife did not perform these duties had immediate grounds for divorce.

Women in cultivating societies had certain rights in the use of land. In most patrilineal societies the first duty of a husband or his relatives was to provide a new bride with land to grow the crops necessary for her household. The wife often had control over the proceeds of her land as well as its management. In polygamous families, each wife usually had her own house and land. Although societies varied with regards to the extent of cooperation among co-wives, in all cases it is possible to consider the household of each wife and her children as a separate economic unit.

Women not only worked as agricultural producers, but also made various handicrafts such as pottery, cloth, baskets, and jewelry, etc. In some areas, these were made purely for home consumption, in others they were exchanged for goods or money.

The basic economic unit of pre-capitalist societies was the household unit. This was nearly always patriarchal, even in matrilineal societies. The father was the primary head of the household and had ultimate authority with regard to all members. He represented its interests and the interests of each separate member to the community.

In most societies a brideprice was given to the bride's family. This ensured the legitimacy of the bride's offspring as members of the husband's lineage in patrilineal groups. The brideprice gave the husband "right" to the wife's offspring, to her labour on the farm, in the house, and in his bed. The brideprice in effect represented a system of legitimising the man's control over women and offspring.

The most essential aim of the family was to produce children. A sterile wife was sure to be divorced or returned to her own family, no matter how fine a worker she was. Children were important sources of labour on the farm. Sons were relied upon as support for parents and the rest of the family in the parents' old age. Daughters brought in wealth in the form of brideprice. Because of high child mortality rates, the family aimed to have as many children as possible. By the time the smallest child was able to walk, it was time to conceive another.

Acquiring more wives meant the acquisition of more wealth, in that women represented a source of children and of labour. More wives meant more land under cultivation, more grain in the storage place, more brewed beer to ensure more labour during harvesting time.

In patrilineal societies, if a man died before his sons were grown-up, his wife(ves), children, and property would be inherited by members of his extended family. If there were grown sons, they would inherit the property and care for the dependents. If a wife chose not to become dependent upon either a brother or son of the deceased, she could return to her own kinsmen. The only property she had rights over was what she had brought to the marriage or the gifts her husband had given her. Farm products and her own children were the "property" of the husband's family.

If a father died in matrilineal society, his sister's sons or his own matrilineal uncle inherited his goods and his children. Nevertheless, women in matrilineal societies often had control over land independent of their husband's land, and could have a stronger pull over their children and grandchildren who were often more influenced by her brother than by their father.

How women reacted to their constraints is a question that has to be left open. African societies were not identical, and varied from very simple hunting and gathering societies to those which were centralised kingdoms. Nevertheless, certain generalisations may be made. Women were economically active and productive in and out of the house. They were highly valued as mothers of children and as good workers. At the same time authority was vested in men and male activities had greater prestige and value.² And the head of the household was dominant over all others, his wife(ves), his sons and daughters, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law.

Whatever formal history has been written of pre-colonial Africa has been written by men, many of whom were colonisers or else Westernised academicians. If we depend only on the written historical record it would appear women did not make history in Africa. Alternative sources must be gleaned: legends, rituals, and oral histories of family and clan ancestors to correct the one-sided view of African history.

The colonial legacy

Although the pre-colonial economy has been presented in an historical context, certain aspects of the "traditional" economy still exist today. But the overall economic base is in the process of transformation as a result of colonisation. Local society is undergoing differentiation and stratification, and national society is undergoing the full process of class formation.

The colonialists (administrators and missionaries) introduced industrial cash crops such as cotton, rubber, sisal, cocoa, and coffee, to feed the factories back in their home countries. These crops were produced either on plantation estates owned by colonialists, or by smallholder peasants. The production of the peasantry was controlled partly through extension services and marketing controls, and enforced through cultivation measures and taxation policies. Cash crop production was export-oriented.

Colonial powers for a time engaged in human trade, the slave trade, and

thereby drained many societies of their most productive men and women. Colonialisation brought famine and plagues hand in hand with the army and the trade caravan.

The economy of each colony began to develop in a distorted fashion. While the agriculture and mining sectors expanded, there was negligible expansion of industry, of internal commerce and trade, or of meaningful internally oriented transport and other communications. The resources that were developed were not developed to fit the needs of the producers. Instead, the producers' needs became commodities produced in the home country and then imported into the colony. In this way, the pattern of underdevelopment was established, whereby we grow what we do not eat and eat what we do not grow.

The labour required to work on the plantation and mining enterprises was restricted mainly to men. Skilled work was primarily delegated to Asians or Europeans and to the very small number of Africans who received "higher education".

The colonial administration had need of semi-literate local people to work at the lower levels of the bureaucracy as clerks, typists, nurses, lower-level extension field officers, and primary-school teachers. They were only interested in *male* manpower, and set up government school for boys, to cater for this need. During the German period in Tanzania, not a single government school for girls was established. Girls' opportunities for formal education were restricted to mission schools and even then they received the minimal amount available, one or two years of literacy training and catechism. Higher-level mission education, the little that existed, was mainly for boys. Government schools for girls were established during the British period, partly (according to colonialist education officers) to provide the educated African with a suitable "counterpart", but unequal access to formal schooling remains a problem to this day.

Further underdevelopment before and after independence has led to marginalisation of the peasantry; at the same time the national economies depend on the surplus production of the peasantry for foreign exchange and national income.

During the colonial period women were not sought as a labour resource for the modern sector, either as plantation workers, mining labourers, local administrators, or smallholder producers of crops for export. Although women had always been economically active as agricultural producers, men were singled out by the colonial administrators for the introduction of new crops and the modern techniques of cultivating them.

Although the old, "subsistence" economy was deliberately maintained through colonial economic-wage and fiscal policies, the woman's role in the overall economy diminished in importance. Prestige and wealth were linked to industrial crops production. Modern farm practices were developed and applied to the men's crops, and the farm implements were meant to be men's tools of production, not women's.

Once again, the history of women's response to and their action taken during the colonial period is not yet written. An example of the complete neglect of women's history is a recent collection of biographies called *Modern Tanzanians*.³ Thirteen men are written about, and not a single woman. Nearly

all are typical members of the petit bourgeois strata which emerged during the colonial period. But women were a part of the struggles for independence; women cultivated, and worked as house servants. However, the history of the African working class and peasantry as a whole also awaits serious attention.

The contemporary situation

Most African countries are now politically independent, but the distorted nature of the economy remains. In all cases of underdeveloped African societies, ultimate control of the locally produced surplus is in the hands of the industrialised capitalist nations' ruling classes. Problems such as unemployment and underemployment, poverty, and the low level of development of social services are all products of economic underdevelopment. Efforts to liberate the national economy from its dependence upon external forces is essential for all, but especially for women. In a situation of chronic unemployment, it is difficult to argue for a female quota system. Without full-scale capital accumulation in the hands of the people; child-care programmes, mass health and other programmes will not be developed on the scale necessary to benefit all the people.

Because of the economic structure of our countries, women are predominantly found in agriculture; in commerce as own-account workers, and in the handicraft sector. These sectors reflect traditional economic occupations for women and tend to have unsteady incomes and no worker benefits. Women wage earners, few in number, are found in service occupations such as nursing, primary-school teaching, and now clerical jobs, but not in potential growth sectors like manufacturing.

There are no legal obstacles to employment of women, or to their entrance into any particular occupational sector. But attitudes reflecting in part the old division of labour, and unequal training opportunities, obviate certain possibilities. Women conform in many cases to what are considered suitable feminine work occupations.

The socialisation processes that occur in the home are extremely powerful. To quote a Nigerian woman teacher, describing play activities of boys and how they reflected sex roles:

While boys were busy playing at hunting, farming, making bows and arrows, jumping, playing football, driving lorries and cars, the girls nursed dolls, fetched firewood and sold cooked food and other market goods, drew water and ground pepper to cook soup.⁴

The African woman's traditional place has been the "home", like her sisters throughout the world. Even when cultivating, the woman was engaged in activity that remained within the boundaries of her husband's territory. Going out today to seek a wage-earning job is perceived to be untraditional by probably all groups save the more highly educated. And the latter group now experience the phenomenon of home decoration: a bureaucrat marries a nurse or a teacher, and in a short while we find her sitting at home, minding the house and the children, and now and then doing volunteer work, so typical of European bourgeois behaviour.

9 don't agree.

The attitude of many towards women at work is summed up well by this statement made by a Moroccan man:

An occupation outside the house tends to make a woman independent; she is in contact with men and thus becomes their equal, whereas men should be superior to women.⁵

Women in urban areas face very significant problems, which are partly due to the new dependent status they acquire. They may be thrust into totally dependent positions. Hardly any jobs are available without at least primary and, increasingly, secondary education. The majority of Tanzanian women simply do not have formal schooling, and hence are cut off from those occupations. Some women survive on petty trade, brewing beer, small handicraft trade, or prostitution. The only other alternative is to be the economic dependent of a husband or a child.

In addition to the general aspects of economic and social underdevelopment discussed above, certain problems emerge with respect to education; there are unequal educational opportunities for girls at all levels of the educational system; there is a high drop-out rate for girls, beginning at the lowest grades; and the areas of study chosen by girls parallel the breakdown of occupations into male and female sectors.

In 1968, for example, girls represented only 38% of the rural primary-school enrolment. Almost twice as many adult women as men are without education. The majority of "school" women reach four standards of education at the most, even in the young adult age group (15-19), whereas men advance into higher levels of education.⁶ The proportion of girls enrolled in primary schools is rising; however, the proportion in government secondary and higher schools is static and even dropping. In 1969 girls represented 27% of form 1 intake and 18% of form 6 intake; by 1971 these figures were 27% and 14% respectively. Intake of females into the university of Dar es Salaam has dropped from 16% in 1970-71 to 11% in 1974-75.⁷

The qualitative aspect, that is, the allocation of girls and women to which areas of study, is another important area to investigate (see Table 1). If we accept the proposition that men and women are inherently equal intellectually and otherwise, the vast resource of skills and energies represented by women is being untapped. Needless to say, calling for equal opportunity for women in education also means calling for a destruction of the present pyramid structure of education, which deliberately limits access to higher levels of education to a very small number of people, selected through the examination process and thereby accepted as the "most able". In this way our class society is made legitimate.

Girls secondary schools are short of qualified maths and science teachers and do not offer some of the more important subject combinations. These include economics, geography and maths; pure and applied maths and physics; and the latter plus engineering. The problem is a vicious circle, because few women then specialise as maths teachers, and male teachers often choose not to remain at girls' schools.

Attitudes of inferiority, especially with respect to subjects presumed to be "boys subjects", also seem prevalent. When girls were asked in the author's

TABLE 1. INTAKE OF STUDENTS INTO UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM, 1974-1975 (First-year students)

	Men	Women
BA	164	25
BA Education	85	5
BSc	37	3
BSc Education	106	24
BSc Hydrology	19	1
BSc Agriculture	60	16
Forestry	19	1
BSc Engineering	90	0
MD	47	3
LLB	36	4
Geology	20	0
Pharmacy	16	2

Source: Duvi *et al.*, "Women and Education in Tanzania", Paper presented to Department of Education Seminar, mimeo.

attitude study to rank reasons why parents preferred to send boys to school, one-third ranked that "boys are more intelligent" as the most important reason.⁸ The girls (Primary Standard 4 pupils, and girls not in school of the same age) stated that the reason they believed this to be true was that boys more often passed their examinations and got secondary-school places; that this is a commonly known fact; or that their parents had told them so.

In 1974, Form 1 girls in one stream of an urban girls secondary school were asked to select the one occupation they would most like to have later in life and to state their reasons why. The choices (based on 28 replies) are as follows: teacher, 9; nurse, 6; doctor, 5; secretary and farmer, 2 each; and lawyer, air hostess, dentist and physiotherapist one each. The reasons given for the choices are important to consider. They are mainly altruistic (help the people; build the nation; build up the health, or the knowledge, of the people). Three replies mentioned "getting money", two for nurses and one for secretary. One of the "teachers", two of the "doctors" and one of the "secretaries" mentioned a liking for the work itself. None mentioned the acquisition of prestige, with possibly one exception.

When I complete my school studies, I would like to become a Secretary. A secretary has many things to do. He or she usually types her Boss's letters and answers the telephone all the time. There are special skills necessary for such work. A secretary must know how to hear and answer the telephone well, and how to type very fast.

Secretaries are important because they must work hard without doing lazy things. I want to become a Secretary because I want to learn about the things which my Boss does. In the years to come, perhaps I will end up doing the work of the Boss.

This young sister's reply is given in full because it captures so well certain elements of the trap women are in: we cannot become bosses on our own account, but must work our way up secretly by picking up skills and knowledge which the bosses inadvertently teach us.

But the general trend of reasons for choices, a concern for others and not for self, could be explained in two different ways. One is to say the girls have been well-politicised and accept their obligations to the people. The other is to say that these responses reflect the girls' expectations first to become a wife and

mother, and second to become a worker or professional of some kind. The traditional role of wife means one's prestige and income is mainly derived from the position of one's husband, the traditional role of women in bourgeois society.

The same class in their second year of secondary school, which consisted of two-thirds of the same group plus some additional students, were once asked to describe "mornings in a Dar es Salaam home". The contents of these essays give an idea of how the girls perceive their home reality. In most essays, images of the mother or the mother and father appear, with images of the mother more often mentioned. Mother prepares breakfast. Mother wakes up, cleans the house, prepares breakfast, bathes, and then sits down to eat. Mother sweeps house while father is sleeping.

My father was sleeping, my mother was washing the babies.

My father also gets ready in the morning to go to work. My mother prepares breakfast for our family.

My father goes to work. My mother begins the housework.

After breakfast mother starts to wash dishes and sweep the house, father goes to the office and I go to school.

The schoolgirl is in a complicated situation. She, like her father, goes out of the house to another world, leaving her mother behind. To what degree does this affect her future expectations towards work, towards marital roles? Is it true that young girls wish mainly for marriage, and will happily accept the role of housewife thereafter?

What of the girls who do not continue post-primary education or who have received no primary schooling whatsoever? They are subjected to very different experiences: they remain home to help in the fields or in the house, with their mothers. By 16 years, they are likely to be married and soon bearing their first child. Do they perceive their world the same way that secondary girls do? A lot will depend upon the range of choices available for young women, which may be very few indeed for a girl in a rural area who lacks a primary-school certificate.

Some observers seem to hold the point of view that traditional sex roles and definitions of appropriate behaviour have changed along with so-called modernisation. Such views are probably based on observations of the behaviour of bourgeois households in which daughters may truly be subjected to very different demands and expectations. But, for example, in city as in country, marriages are arranged; a young girl is restricted in her movements by varying degrees prior to marriage; and many restrictions concerning appropriate female behaviour confine a wife to her home, especially after nightfall. It is well known, for example, that meetings of our women's organisation cannot take place in the evening, because women must be at home then.

According to our marriage law, recently passed and put into effect, children are now legally the property of their fathers, though they may in the case of divorce remain with the mother until the age of seven years if the court so decides. In the case of the father's death, the children are placed in the care of

his relatives, along with the insurance benefits and the bulk of the husband's property. Although a woman now has the option to divorce her husband, by so doing she loses her children and whatever material goods she has helped put into the home directly and indirectly, unless she has got a name tag signed and sealed on her possessions and is a powerful woman.

Issues relating to the changing status of women are increasingly discussed, sometimes hotly, in legislative debate and in the newspapers. For example, women were extremely vociferous against making polygamy legal in 1969. Some also derided the national militia's enforcement of the laws against western-style dress. Although the laws were meant to apply equally to men and women, those in authority tended to concentrate on women in short skirts asserting that they were shameless and were showing signs of becoming autonomous *vis-à-vis* men.

Women were also effective in changing the laws concerning maternity benefit. Until this year such benefits were restricted to bona fide married women. Originally, the leadership of the National Women's Organisation of Tanzania (Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania) also rejected the idea of maternity leave for unmarried women, on the grounds that it would encourage immorality among women and increase the number of pregnancies in factories and offices. By 1972, however, UWT had formally changed its stand on the issue. When the Secretary General was asked to explain this change, the answer was:

People's wishes. After the Mbeya annual conference, it was quite apparent that all wanted paid maternity leave to all mothers and since the annual conference is the organisation's supreme body, we had then no alternative but to declare our policy statement on the issue.⁹

Happily enough, our leadership has heeded the wishes of the women. A new maternity bill was passed in 1975 which provides full paid maternity leave of three months for all women irrespective of marital status.

It is often schoolgirls who are accused of rebelling not only against overt repression but also against traditional authority relationships between the young and the old as well as sexist relationships. In a letter to the editor of our local newspaper, a man deplors "noisy" girls:

Schoolgirls persist in wearing mini-dresses, indulge themselves in all sort of sophisticated culture, and apart from this, misbehave towards the public. This is so grave that the public can justifiably question the kind of game they are up to.

The incident related by the "Annoyed" [an earlier letter] corresponds very closely to the one I witnessed some time ago. A group of four schoolgirls were shouting so loudly in a bus that they became subject to attention.

One of the passengers raised his voice urging them to behave like *true schoolgirls*. Poor man, he had words spat on him so abusively that he almost lost his temper.

This is the sort of future mothers and leaders we expect. Will the teachers investigate this and stamp out the stain from these girls' behaviour before it gets rusty.¹⁰

Why did the writer find the incident so annoying, so "grave"? Would he have reacted the same way if it had been a group of schoolboys? The reactions on all sides are of great interest, in particular the response of the girls, so alien to the traditional submissive behaviour of women in African traditional society.

The contradictions young schoolgirls face were expressed recently in a series of literature classes discussing Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*.¹¹ The story revolves around the rivalry between two men, an old traditional patriarch and a young educated urbanised youth, each competing for the beautiful village maiden.

How do schoolgirls (Form 3) respond to such a story? In one session, the teacher set up a debate between different groups, contrasting the views of Lakunle, the educated man, and Sidi, the young traditional girl, focusing the debate on the issue of brideprice. Some girls openly expressed their identification with Sidi's favourable views towards brideprice, and wearing traditional cloth. It was pointed out that a girl who didn't get a brideprice would be accused of being a prostitute or of not being a virgin.

Others pointed out the bad aspects of brideprice. Following is an excerpt from the exchange that took place. I have simply labelled them as "Lakunle" or "Sidi", though the speakers were not always the same persons.

Lakunle: I think Lakunle is right. If you pay brideprice, it's like buying someone, like buying a slave . . . you can do anything you want with her . . . I think it is not nice to be made a slave, not be free to go out, be anyone.

Sidi: I know Lakunle is talking that way because he is living in town . . . someday we may all become a village . . . brideprice is a good thing . . . if you are going to be married without money, he can anytime chase you away.

Lakunle: . . . parents can ask for lots of money, for example 2000 shillings (nearly \$300) . . . some husbands can be very tough, beat you if you run away . . . you can say if you run away and tell parents give me money . . . parents will say, we have no money . . . you go back . . . "where's my money?" [husband says].

Sidi: . . . with brideprice, husband will not beat you . . . cannot tell you to go back, parents bring back money . . . some other elders there will be there. They will say it is childish to bring back the girl and get money . . . in the village, the good girls are the ones who are married by paying brideprice. They are always married with brideprice. It is only to save their mothers and their parents—because girls are flowers.

Teacher: Will you get married with no brideprice?

Lakunle: Yes (in unison).

Sidi: (silent).

The struggle ahead

Reactions to, and rebellion against, some of the traditional and bourgeois notions about women have been described above. Without a full-scale social transformation, the kinds of services and opportunities for active social production will not develop, partly because it may not be "profitable" for the big capitalist interests here and abroad.

The woman in the home, carrying out food processing and preparation at the same level of technology found in pre-capitalist societies, performs important functions for the system. She provides for her husband the attention and concern a man misses at the workplace. Reproduction of the labour force through the work of the woman in the home is at low cost for the profit makers, but at very great cost to the women thereby limited from full participation in society. If

half our population are not involved fully in our struggle for further development and against imperialism, that struggle is weakened and left vulnerable.

It is easy for women, stuck away in isolation from each other, tethered to their home like a cow, to perceive their problems to be personal, individual ones, instead of being a problem for the whole society. A woman cannot struggle in isolation. Collective action of women is necessary to turn upside down those aspects of society which deny them their full place in the struggles ahead.

Up until now, our women's organisation has not chosen to act primarily as a political organisation, committed to the class struggle and the struggle against imperialism. Its activities are typical of bourgeois women's clubs in industrialised capitalist nations, with charity activities, fund-raising balls and domestic science classes.

In contrast, the importance of the struggle for women's liberation *alongside* the struggle against imperialism has been expressed through the praxis of progressive forces in the Portuguese ex-colonies. At a meeting of the All African Women's Conference in Dar es Salaam in 1972, a woman member of FRELIMO's liberation army pointed out that the changes in the position of women in Mozambique have been accomplished through political engagement.

It has been our militant role in a political organisation, having a correct political line, that has given us the proper orientation necessary to make our efforts more effective. It is political awareness that has enabled us to find the most correct path to our emancipation . . . our women's organisation must be an arm, and instrument, of a political movement.¹²

Rural collectivisation through *ujamaa* village policy has led to positive changes in certain areas. In most *ujamaa* villages, individual members, men and women, are paid in cash or kind according to their work. For many women this is the first time they have received cash remuneration on a regular systematic basis. Usually, even where women farm their own commercial crop, it is sold to the cooperative society through the husband or head of household. It is therefore not surprising that women are the most ardent supporters of socialist rural policies in many areas of Tanzania.

One drawback of rural collectivisation thus far is that there remains a concentration on crop production and the perpetuation of traditional aspects of the division of labour in production and in reproduction. An alternative strategy would be to develop multiple production/service centres throughout the country, based on collective units of agriculture and industrial production. Industrialisation is a fundamental necessity for socialist production and transformation in any underdeveloped nation.

There are three basic arguments for spreading industrialisation throughout the rural areas rather than concentrating industrial projects in urban areas. First, rural industrialisation would undermine and help to resolve growing urban-rural contradictions. Second, it would provide all Tanzanians with a rapid socialisation process related to scientific and technological change and communal life and work. Third, it would provide the only kind of institutional framework within which the emancipation of women would be possible. Everyone would be part of a completely different set of social relations, based

on larger-scale production, a more complex division of labour, a more scientific productive process. Traditional modes of production based on family production units would become obsolete, which would turn upside down age and sex criteria for wealth, status, and power. Aspects of the traditional lineage system which are obstacles to socialist transformation would also become obsolete. Given the security offered by the collective, individuals would no longer rely on the extended family system for support, and all members of the collective would become comrades.

In China, every inhabitant of a commune is guaranteed a living, children and old people as well as more economically productive adults. Every member has five guarantees: food, housing, fuel, means of bringing up children, and burial.¹³

A woman's relationship to her work would be drastically altered in such a production system. A woman peasant now cultivates on her husband's land, and the bulk of her produce is intended to feed him and his children. In the communal production systems envisioned, men, women, and children have their own individual work, and relate to that work not as somebody's wife or child, but on their own account. Whether it is in factory or farm production, women would participate in the same kind of work and participate in all other aspects of society. Men would be forced to perceive that women are their equal in all things, which would help destroy sex-stereotyped roles. Women's attitudes of inferiority towards themselves would also change in the process of actually experiencing and testing their countless abilities which were previously stifled.

So many of the duties expected of wives and mothers could be handled in a rational and scientific way but only through full social transformation. It is only in a socialist society that people are put first, not profit. Day-care centres with full medical service would provide better care for children than we individual mothers ever could. Semi-processing and preparation of foods would ease the work of women at home, and eventually encourage men to participate in cooking and other home responsibilities. With the provision of a water source nearby, food items such as pre-processed corn meal, and other goods and services, women would be released from many of the routine chores that now constrain them.

To achieve these changes in our society and its economy, requires correct political analysis and action within a political framework—and it also requires a militant woman's organisation. It would be a mistake to follow the words of the head of the All African Women's Conference, Madame Cisse when she said: "We appeal to men to help us . . . men hold the key to the world and can open the door for the women to advance".

If we observe the experience in other countries where a socialist transformation has taken place through class struggle, changes in male-female roles have not come easily or at all. In China the struggle for full emancipation of women still continues today. Significant is the fact that the Chinese Communist Party is spearheading that struggle, and views it as a problem for society, not for women alone. At the same time, women's organisations are promoted in order to provide a vehicle for full mobilisation of all women.

Our future is in our hands, but we face a world not of our own choosing. Elements of the old (pre-capitalist and colonialist systems) and the new (capita-

list system in its latest stage of development) confront us, demanding firm, organised analysis and action. In Tanzania, our government, through its official newspaper, has publicly recognised the contradictions which exist.¹⁴

These days, it is too often argued even by African revolutionaries that the liberation of women will come only when all mankind is liberated from the shackles of colonialist, racist, and imperialist exploitation.

This is true in terms of the long-term aims and objectives of the struggle by the people of the world for total liberation and true development. But this cannot be said seriously without looking at the concrete problems facing women, particularly in Africa.

For although all the African peoples have suffered together centuries of enslavement and oppression, those who happened to be women among them had their position made worse by the very nature of imperialist exploitation as well as by the nature of certain reactionary traditions.

Male chauvinism, for example, a product of feudal, colonial, religious, traditional and capitalist prejudices, is still prevailing even in African countries that have embarked on a socialist road of development. This chauvinism is still having extremely adverse effects on the women. The question of the position of women in Africa cannot therefore be postponed until the world is liberated. It must be tackled now so that the contribution of African women to the struggle for liberation will not be hindered by the unsatisfactory position most of them occupy in society at present.

Public proclamations are one thing, however, and militant action is another. Up until now (May 1975) International Women's Year in Tanzania has been, in practice, a few radio programmes; meetings attended by bourgeois women of our society; and the constant push by men and women leaders for women to work harder—not to be full and active members of society's work force, but to work harder at whatever they are doing now. Our future will be made *for us* if we continue in this way. The future will see a preservation of women's inferior and dominated place in society.

It is true a few highly educated women will be able to acquire affluence and prestige through "careers", but they will remain in an ambivalent personal position and they will become members of the oppressor class in society. The labouring women of the peasantry and the working class are likely to be more exploited than before.

We have observed signs of women's rebellion against contradictions in their lives, but they represent mainly individual, isolated and spontaneous outbursts of talk or action. We must develop a militant women's organisation committed to the anti-imperialist and class struggle, in order to give shape and meaning to our efforts, and to successfully act together upon our world and transform it.

*The time is now.
Women workers of the world unite.
We have nothing to lose.
but our bonds of servitude.*

References

1. Patrilineal and matrilineal as used here refer especially to the lines of inheritance in human society. Patrilineal denotes the system whereby wealth, children and wives are inherited by relatives of the husband/father and his grown-up

sons. In a matrilineal system, the mother's brother is the focal point of inheritance, and the father/husband's control over his household wealth and children is much weaker. Close sister-brother relationships can prevail to help sustain the mother's control over her children (since he is their maternal uncle). Whether patrilineal or matrilineal, African households are patriarchal, however. The husband is "the boss", his behaviour not unlike the feudal "lord of the manor", before whom wives and children literally bow and serve as productively and submissively as they can.

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