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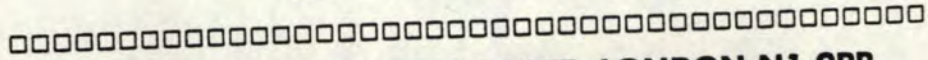
official organ of the African
national congress south africa



THE TWO ANTI-IMPERIALISTS HONOUR MANDELA

SECHABA

DECEMBER ISSUE 1984



P. O. BOX 38, 28 PENTON STREET, LONDON N1 9PR
UNITED KINGDOM. TELEPHONE: 01-837 2012
TELEGRAMS: MAYIBUYE TELEX: 299555ANCSAG

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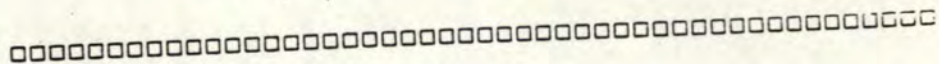
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<i>Our front cover picture shows the meeting in August 1984 between Comrade O R Tambo, President of the ANC, and Comrade Erich Honecker, Chairman of the State Council of the GDR and Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.</i>	
<i>Our back cover shows Bishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize.</i>	



EDITORIAL

Indira Gandhi: Friend of our People



As we go to press, things in India are not all that good. The cause of it all is the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India.

India has a special significance for our struggle. The mere presence in South Africa of almost a million people of Indian origin tells the story. These people have fought side by side with Africans, Coloureds and democratic Whites, and some of their leaders, like Dadó

and Naicker, became, during their lifetime, national figures in our liberation struggle. Others have spent years on the notorious Robben Island — Billy Nair, who spent 20 years on Robben Island is now in the British Consulate in Durban and can go back to gaol any minute, and Ahmed Kathrada is serving life imprisonment together with Nelson Mandela and others.

There are also linguistic and cultural ties between India and the Indian people in South Africa. Even family ties: the grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Mrs Ela Ramgobin, is an important personality in South African Black politics. By the way, Mahatma Gandhi got his political baptism in South Africa at the beginning of this century, when he formed an organisation for Indians that inspired the formation of the ANC. This was before he became a leader in India.

This is not all. India was one of the first countries to take cognisance of the oppressed people in South Africa. India broke economic and cultural ties with racist South Africa in 1948 — a year after its independence — because of apartheid. Since then India's record at the UN and other international bodies, such as the Afro-Asian movement, has been clearly an anti-apartheid one.

Mrs Indira Gandhi was instrumental in granting the Nehru Award to Nelson Mandela, recognising not only the plight of political prisoners and the oppressed Blacks, but also their struggle as symbolised by Nelson Mandela and the ANC. President O R Tambo received the Award from the Premier, Indira Gandhi, on behalf of Nelson Mandela.

New Delhi, during the premiership of Indira Gandhi, had become a haven of anti-apartheid activities, and numerous conferences on the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean took place. These conferences pointed a finger at racist South Africa. It is common knowledge that the ANC office in India receives assistance from the Indian Government and people; that the movement's national days (January 8th, June 26th and August 9th) are commemorated throughout India, and articles from *Sechaba* are translated into the various Indian languages.

By the time of her death Indira Gandhi was the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement — a movement which has earned for itself the wrath and anger of the imperialist countries, including South Africa. At international organisations such as the World Peace Council, the Women's International Democratic

2 Federation, the World Federa-

tion of Trade Unions or the World Federation of Democratic Youth, representatives from India always stand with us against apartheid.

It is for these reasons that Black South Africa mourned Indira Gandhi's death. At one memorial meeting in Lenasia, Johannesburg, more than 1 500 packed into Patidar Hall on October 31st to pay tribute to the late Indian Premier Indira Gandhi. The memorial service, organised by the Hindu Seva Samaj and the Transvaal Indian Congress, was addressed by (among others) A R Dawood, Albertina Sisulu and Maniben Sita. Similar memorial services were held elsewhere in the country.

These and many other reasons force us to reject as hypocrisy the letters of condolence sent to the Indian Government "on behalf of all the people of South Africa and particularly South Africans of Indian origin," by the racist Prime Minister, P W Botha. The Rajbansis, the Reddys and other stooges followed suit. How can they speak "on behalf of all South Africans" when in the recent elections they were rejected by the people? How can they talk like that when they incarcerate Nelson Mandela, who "speaks for all South Africans," and is a hero of India? How can they "regret the tragedy which has befallen India," and "extend sincere sympathies" when they militarise the Indian Ocean so as to attack countries like India?

All this double talk cannot blind us from facts: the people in South Africa are up in arms, and whether the racists like it or not they cannot stop our people and movement from their declared path of liberating South Africa. The military occupation of Vereeniging — which virtually meant that the racists have declared our people an enemy population — will not save the racists from the people's anger.

Indira Gandhi always understood and supported our struggle. This is what we shall remember Indira Gandhi for: her conviction in and fight for the triumph of our cause!

**A DISCUSSION
ARTICLE**

BLACK WOMAN- HOOD AND NATIONAL LIBERAT- ION

By Phyllis Jordan

This article deals with important aspects of the nature of women's oppression in South Africa, and the struggles of Black women. To mark the end of the Year of the Women, we publish it as a 'discussion article,' because we feel that the question of the position of women does not disappear with the end of the Year of the Women, 1984.

The most crucial question facing liberation movements today is the question of political programmes and perspectives. This is evidenced both in current tactical disputes among partisans and allies of such movements, and the wealth of literature that has been produced on the subject. In this respect our South African freedom movement is no different. Being engaged in a struggle to storm the citadel of reaction and imperialism on the African continent, its future course is of great importance, not only to South Africans today, but also to the world movement of which it forms a part.

It is one of the ironies of history that the most pervasive and total oppression, the oppression of women, has been to a large extent neglected by scholars within the ranks of the movement. This can be explained, in part, by the male chauvinism which has been the bane of colonial liberation movements, and also the imprecise terms in which we discuss the future socio-economic order we envisage for a free South Africa.

And yet, the success or otherwise of our struggle may depend on the extent to which we are able to involve as wide as possible a front of liberation forces against the oppressor regime. Women, specifically the Black women, will and must form a central pillar of such a front. We submit, Black women have no cause to commit themselves totally to the liberation struggle, unless the freedom to be achieved will in turn grant them equality and human dignity.

The importance of our liberation struggle derives from the strategic significance of South Africa in the world. Our country has historically been regarded as the gateway to the African continent. It stands at the confluence of the Indian and the Atlantic Oceans, and consequently has an important place in the strategic considerations of imperialism. It is the chief industrial nation on the continent, and as such, wields an inordinate influence in the world and African economy, an influence which could play a decisive role in the economic development of our continent. Thus, the liberation movement in South Africa has implications that go far beyond the immediate boundaries

of our country, as the culmination both of the freedom struggle on the continent, and of the struggles of the peoples of African descent for equality throughout the world.

Black Womanhood and National Liberation

The effect of White domination on the Black people is perhaps most glaringly expressed in its treatment of African women. Not only has it debased us as members of an oppressed people, but debases us to a position below that of objects. Here segregation, 'White leadership with justice,' apartheid, 'separate development,' call it what they may, appears without its rhetoric or the velvet gloves. The bare knuckles of its iron fist stare one in the face, and its vicious voice crackles like a whip. In its treatment of Black women, White racism has not even bothered to try pretending.

Because they are the most oppressed and exploited, firstly as Africans, as producers of wealth in an exploitative society, and also as women, this article addresses itself to the position of African women, whose liberation must be the pivotal issue around which can be elaborated a strategy for the emancipation of women.

As a gender, Black women occupy the lowest status position in the racist dominated society. Firstly, as members of the colonised and nationally oppressed groups, they are victims of White racism, secondly as the 'second sex' in a patriarchal society. women at home

and in the community at large are dominated by institutions created and controlled by men; lastly, as producers in a capitalist society they, like other workers, are robbed of the value of their labour. Hence we speak of the triple oppression of Black women.

But this condition is neither inevitable nor is it natural. In order to better understand how it came into being, we will cast our eyes back into history, examine briefly the position of women in pre-colonial African society, look at what took place through conquest, and then the aftermath, the condition of African women today.

Women in Pre-colonial South Africa.

The pre-capitalist African societies that existed in South Africa before the arrival of the Europeans may be characterised as pre-class societies. Though there were hierarchies of power within them, none exhibited the features of class societies, that is, societies divided into two or more groups, one of which controls the means of production and exchange, the other being a group of producers who produce more than they consume under the command of the super-ordinate group. The decisive means of production, the land, was collectively owned. The chief repository of wealth was livestock, owned by individual families. In the course of their evolution from simpler forms they had acquired a sexual division of labour. As settled mixed agriculturalists, the African

TABLE 1

Based on 1936 Census of Native Females
Page XVI of 1936 Census

Ages	10+	20+	30+	40+	50+	60+
Agriculture	50 ths	36 ths	29 ths	19 ths	13 ths	9 ths
Manufacturing	650	996	767	486	272	144
Transp/Commun	59	47	19	14	4	22
Prof/Sport/Ent	648	26 281	683	240	89	28
Comm/Finance	34	81	52	38	19	15
Dom Serv	83 086	77 803	41 609	23 765	11 175	4 422
Other	4 467	1 759	829	451	390	276

people engaged in both tilling the land and the raising of livestock. In general, responsibility for tilling devolved on the women, while raising and maintenance of livestock was the responsibility of the men. There were, of course, exceptions to this general rule. Among the Mpondo of the Eastern Cape, for example, men took part in tilling.

On the whole, these two spheres of economic activity were of equal importance to the communities concerned. Women, as both the direct producers of the staples of the diet, and the reproducers of the community itself, were regarded as essential contributors to the sustenance and survival of their communities. This was given symbolic recognition through the custom of lobola — bride wealth — which the family of a prospective husband paid to the bride's family to compensate them for the loss of her labour power and skills.

Despite their equal economic responsibilities, women were not accorded the same political and social status as men. African traditional society was both patrilineal (tracing descent through father to the child) and patriarchal (dominated by men). The unit of social organisation was the family, headed by the father, who was considered master of the homestead. All persons attached to such a homestead — whether as wives, children, retainers or clients — were subject to his authority and regarded as his wards. A woman could never aspire to be the head of a homestead. This was a function solely fulfilled by men. Thus a widow became the ward either of her eldest son or of the male relatives of her deceased husband.

- In politics it was men who had the right to attend the political assembly (the *kgotla* or the *nkundla*), where court cases were tried and the policies of the community decided. Each adult male was eligible to attend these and participate fully in the discussions. If he distinguished himself as eloquent and wise, he could aspire to being appointed to the inner councils of state, or the position of headman for his village.

With an inferior status, women derived their rights through their male guardians. Before

marriage a woman's rights were vested in her father. In the event of his death they were transferred either to a paternal uncle or to her brother. After marriage, these rights were vested in her husband.

Checks and Balances on Men's Power

There was, however, a rational kernel in the sexual division of labour. Women, socialised to assume the responsibilities of child-bearing and raising infants, were assigned work that was more sedentary and close to the home. Men, on the other hand, took on the work that entailed mobility and absences from the home.

Though suffering all these disabilities, women in traditional society enjoyed certain clearly defined rights, and there were checks and balances against the abuse of their power by the men. A woman who was a specialist — a midwife, a traditional healer, diviner — was unequivocally entitled to all the earnings she made in pursuance of her skill. A female artisan — a matmaker, potter, leather-goods worker — in her craft was considered a legal senior, and all her earnings were hers. Apart from these forms of personal property, the *ubulunga* cattle given to a woman by her family on her marriage never became part of her husband's property, but were hers until her death. On her death, all these and any offspring thereof were handed down to her youngest child. A woman's personal property could not be attached to pay off her husband's debts, even by a court of law. If her marriage dissolved, all this property was hers to take with her. Though the missionaries and 'Native Commissioners' of the 19th century were loth to admit it:

"the traditional rights of women in Africa were, in some places, and in some respects, greater than the rights of women in Victorian England." (1)

It was only in the religious sphere that women enjoyed a status equal to and even superior to that of men:

"... the great majority of diviners were women; they were the clairvoyants, the

mediums of traditional African society, but their status was much higher than that of a medium in contemporary western society, for traditional diviners were believed to interpret the will of the ancestors." (2)

In Southern Africa, two of the best known historic mediums are women: Nongqawuse, the daughter of Mhlakaza, amongst the Xhosa during the mid-19th century; and the Nehanda medium who played such a prominent role in the Zimbabwean Chimurenga of 1896-7. The Rain Queen of the Lovedu in the Transvaal is a similar figure, who combines the role of high priestess with that of queen.

The position of woman as the fount of life was given recognition in a variety of ways which awarded her a special status. The notion of unequivocal love/kindness is expressed, in Nguni, as *ububele* - literally, female-breastedness, which is evocative of a mother fondling a nursing child. Only a woman, by throwing herself over a defeated fighter, could save him from being finished off by an assailant. In sharp contrast to our present-day modern ways, wife-beating was considered scandalous, and the ultimate form of craven-heartedness. Thus did custom, through group pressure and traditional notions of masculine honour, temper the power men exercised over women in pre-colonial African societies.

The Transition to Capitalism

South Africa's transition to capitalism was initiated through military conquest. Within the space of a few short decades, social relations throughout the country were almost totally transformed. The watershed of this process was the opening up of the mines - first in Kimberley in 1870, then on the Witwatersrand in 1885. The mines irrevocably implanted the capitalist mode of production in our country, and, for the first time, in a form that would involve ever-growing numbers of the African people. They set in motion a veritable social revolution, affecting the three major sectors of the rural economy: (a) the African peasant sector, (b) the White commercial sector of agriculture, and (c) the pre-capitalist African traditional peasant sector.

The impact of colonialism on African agriculture could be described as both destructive and vitalising. Historically we have always emphasised the destructive aspect, both because it is more readily visible and because its impact was more thorough. After each war, land was seized from African possession and handed to White colonists. Its former occupants either had to seek work on the farms carved out of their former lands or were driven into over-congested areas still under African control. Needless to say, ecological problems, unknown in the traditional setting, now beset these agrarian communities - the land was over-utilised as bigger numbers of farmers tried to cultivate an ever-diminishing territory, the pasture was overgrazed as larger herds were squeezed on to a shrinking commonage. With the advance of colonial government into African-held lands came taxation, labour tributes and forced labour - all of them extorted with the threat of armed force. By these and other means the Africans were enmeshed in the web of the White-controlled colonial economy, while the economic base of traditional peasant agriculture was gradually undermined and ultimately destroyed.

There was, however, another facet to the impact of colonialism, which we wish to focus on here. From about the 1830s there were Africans in the Eastern Cape who were adopting agricultural techniques copied from the Europeans. Mission stations in the area helped popularise irrigation canals, the plough and the planting of orchards, so that by the third quarter of the century, there was already a substantial body of Africans who had successfully made the transition from traditional to modern methods of cultivation. From amongst these grew a landowning peasantry, which, in turn, became stratified into three different categories as some proved more successful than others. By the 1870s one could speak of a rich, a middle and a poor peasantry, all of whom were modernists.

The rich and middle peasants almost invariably were converts to Christianity who owned fertile farmland. Such a successful African farmer might branch out into other

fields of private enterprise such as transport driving, send his children to a boarding school to improve their chances in life, invest his savings in more plant and equipment, and was usually also a voter, taking a keen interest in the politics of the Cape parliament. The extent to which this stratum of African farmers had succeeded may be gauged from the comments of a traveller through the Eastern Cape in 1871:

"... taking everything into consideration, the native district of Peddie surpasses the European district of Albany in its productive powers." (3)

Another traveller wrote in 1880:

"... man for man the Kaffirs of these parts are better farmers than the Europeans; more careful of their stock, cultivating a larger area of land, and working themselves more assiduously." (4)

By the end of the 19th century it could be said that not only had a substantial number of Africans been drawn into the capitalist economy, but a large chunk of this number had successfully adapted to it. The traditional peasant was, in the meantime, marked out for extinction.

The commercial sector of agriculture was, from its beginnings, the domain of the land-grabbing White colonist farmer. In the Eastern Cape it had been practice to drive the Africans completely off the land. In the Boer republics the Voortrekkers sought to establish military control over the land, then force the traditional peasantry into some semi-feudal form of labour coercion.

The Bambata Rebellion

In Natal, the Whites grabbed the choicest portions of land, then allocated inadequate infertile portions to their African subjects, who would thus be forced by economic circumstances to seek work on the White farms. The Boers had a more direct means of securing their labourers. Periodically they launched punitive military expeditions against the in-

dependent African communities on their periphery, with the object of capturing 'apprentices' — in fact, slaves — who were then shared out among the Boer farmers.

In spite of its crass brutalities, the Voortrekker farming economy was grossly inefficient. Pressure from its interaction with merchants and the needs that arose in the context of the mining industry gradually affected change within it. As a rule the Voortrekkers did not allow Africans within their republics to own land, ride horses or purchase firearms. Tenant farming and various other forms of landlordism were, however, permissible. Boers slowly began to appreciate that these were less costly means of extracting the surplus product from the direct producers. The system was adopted also in the British colony of Natal, where, by 1874, it was estimated that five million acres of White-owned land was leased to African tenant farmers.

Tenant farming involved a semi-feudal relationship between the landlord and the peasant. In return for a piece of land on which to set up a home and cultivate, the peasant paid the landlord rent either in cash or labour time. By hard work and frugality, a number of peasants found it possible to pay their rent, pay their taxes and still have a marketable surplus. Those who were most successful in utilising the system even branched out into transport driving, trades and other forms of enterprise. In some areas peasants made such a success of tenancy that farmers preferred to lease out all their land rather than hire labour. By the 1880s they constituted the largest portion of the modern peasantry, which by its industry and initiative threatened to outstrip White landowners as competitors on the market place.

After 1880 there was a concerted effort made to separate the African peasantry from their land. The chief instigators of this were the mining interests, allied with White agriculture. Mining required a mass labour force, which could be only at the expense of the African peasant; White agriculture sought to crush a potential competitor while modernising its own methods of exploitation. The creation of the Chamber of Mines in 1890 gave the mining

TABLE 2

Distribution of Female Professional and Salaried Personnel by Race, 1970.
Based on Table 4, Ch. 31, South African Yearbook, 1975

	Whites	Africans	Col.	Asians
Ph. Scientists	230	0	0	0
Ph. Sc. Tech.	490	60	10	0
Architects	110	0	0	0
Engineers	60	0	0	0
Surveyors	0	0	0	0
Draughtsmen	860	0	0	0
Eng. Tech.	60	0	0	0
Aircraft/ship Officers	10	0	0	0
Life Sc.	270	0	0	0
Doctor/Dent. Veterinarians	870	20	40	60
Nurses/Midwives Aux. Nurses	25 070	25 780	5 640	860
Medic. Aux.	3 860	160	110	50
Accountants	120	0	0	0
Jurists	100	0	0	0
Teachers	33 730	26 880	8 870	1 910
Nuns	900	780	60	10
Other Prof.	9 920	840	420	50

interests the leverage they needed. As a well-organised and wealthy interest group, no government could ignore them. As fate would have it, the pressure from these two interest groups coincided with a Rinderpest epidemic in 1897, which killed off some 80% of African-owned cattle. Poverty drove thousands into the waiting arms of the labour recruiters.

A number of structural factors also conspired to render the African peasant easy prey for the mining interests. The completion of the railroads linking the Witwatersrand to the coast was a direct threat to the transport wagon operator. These railways also by-passed the
8 areas where African peasants were concen-

trated, thus effectively shutting them off from the market. Imported US grain serviced the bakeries of Kimberley, while rich wheatlands in the Caledon valley went without a market. Peasant discontent erupted in the Poll Tax Rebellion of 1905-6, which was ruthlessly crushed by the Natal government. The yoke of the migrant labour system could now be firmly fastened on the neck of the African peasant. The male population was increasingly creamed off the land in the African rural areas, producing the cyclical effects associated with labour migrancy. The *soup de grace* was delivered with the passage of the Natives' Land Act of 1913. This put an end to the tenant

farmer and brought into being the tenant labourer. Simultaneously it had the effect of transforming the White landlord into a capitalist farmer. The transition to capitalism on the land was complete.

The mining industry was the catalysing agent in the entrenchment of capitalism in South Africa. It definitively shifted the country's economic centre of gravity from the rural areas to the towns, began the most dramatic demographic changes the country had ever experienced and laid the bases for the future development of heavy and secondary industry.

Its most profound effect, however, was the creation of an indigenous proletariat. The capitalist mode of production requires a 'free' labour force, 'free,' that is, from any other means of subsistence other than by the sale of its labour power. It was in order to create such a labour force that the colonial governments imposed onerous taxes on the African people, restricted or abolished our right to own land, and destroyed the political independence of African kingdoms. As the Simonses comment in their *Class and Colour in South Africa*:

"South Africa's industrial era was baptised in the blood and the subjugation of small nations."

It was also, specifically, in the mining industry that the racially exclusive character of South African capitalism has its source. By 1872 the White diggers at Kimberley had laid down that Africans and Coloureds should be excluded from the diamond fields unless they were in the employ of a white, that Africans be prohibited from owning and operating a mine, and that Africans be barred from owning or dealing in diamonds. When gold was discovered on the Rand these measures were exported lock, stock and barrel, to buttress the racist laws of the Kruger republic. These measures ensured that whatever shape it assumed, South African capitalism was to be for Whites only — the owners, controllers and manipulators of the system would be White — whether South African or from abroad. The place of Blacks in the system was as pre-defined labourers.

The establishment of the Chamber of Mines

in 1890 gave a uniform shape to the emergent capitalist order. Low wages, the compound system, the pass laws and the destruction of African rights became the basic features of the system. When the Act of Union was passed, all these were institutionalised as the means by which the ruling class secured the processes of capital accumulation and maintained control over the predominantly Black working class.

The Impact on African Women

The impact on African women of the developments recounted above was very far-reaching:

* As a modern African peasantry grew up, they relinquished the traditional division of labour. Men and the oxen they tended now took over the predominant role in tilling. The women in the modern peasant household became bound to the kitchen, and their role in production became marginal.

* As the African peasants, both traditional and modern, were drawn into the orbit of capitalism, cheap imported manufactures displaced the African crafts, especially wares produced by women — pots, mats, calabashes, etc — further reducing their economic role.

* Women were re-introduced into cultivation only when the migrant labour system was systematically taking men off the land. This occurred in a context of decay and rural decline characterised by droughts, livestock epidemics and falling production. By 1900 it was evident that most districts in the Transkei, for example, could no longer produce sufficient grain to feed themselves. This situation has steadily deteriorated during this century, so that one can no longer even speak of a subsistence economy in the reserves. Most families in the Bantustans today rely on the remittances of migrant labourers.

* The Land Act, the pass laws and the Urban Areas Act (with all its subsequent amendments) have confined African women to the rural areas, where they are either trapped in the poverty of a survival Bantustan economy or chained to the backbreaking toil of farm labour. The migrant labour system thus defines the special oppression suffered by the African

woman. It has firstly forced a substantial section of our women into a position of almost total economic dependence on their menfolk, and secondly, by its working, imprisons us in the lowest status work.

The so-called 'modernisation' of South Africa has, thus, had an enslaving effect on the African woman. This status has been institutionalised in the Natal Code and the Natives' Administration Act of 1927. In terms of the Natal Code, which is applicable to all African women resident in that province, African women are legal minors, under the guardianship either of their fathers, their husbands or their male relatives. Exemption from the provisions of the code is in the hands of the Native Commissioners.

The Natives' Administration Act of 1927 extended the provisions of the Natal Code to the other provinces. Section (b) reads:

"A Bantu woman who is a partner in a customary union and who is living with her husband shall be deemed to be a minor and her husband shall be deemed to be her guardian."

The rightlessness of the African woman is in large measure related to her economic marginalisation. It is to the role of African women in the economy that we must now turn.

Colour, Class and Gender

South Africa is a capitalist socio-economic formation, and, as in others of this type, political, economic and social power derives from the ownership and control of the main sectors of productive property. What distinguishes South African capitalism from all others is that there is an absolute legal bar against any Black person raising himself to such positions of power. In addition to being racist, South Africa is also a patriarchal society in which women are subordinated to men — by law, social custom and convention. Thus, when referring to stratification and the distribution of power in the society, we necessarily have to deal with three categories, those of colour (race), class and gender.

South Africa is marked by the low level of female participation in the economy outside the home. As compared with a country like Britain, where 50% of the adult female population is considered economically active (i.e. in gainful employment outside the home), the comparable figure for South Africa is 25%. The discrepancies are even greater when one examines the different sectors of the economy. Only approximately 4% of the African female population is involved in the industrial sector. The overwhelming majority of Black women are employed in agriculture and domestic service. In the industrial sector, they are invariably in areas supposedly related to 'women's domestic role' — in food processing, textiles, garment making. In the service sector they are overwhelmingly in catering and laundering.

African women began to arrive in the cities only after the droughts and livestock epidemics of the 1903-5 period. Economic imperatives forced growing numbers of women into the towns in search of a living. This pattern repeated itself after the agricultural depression of 1911; in the aftermath of the Land Act in 1913 — when whole African families were driven off the farms into the cities; during the Second World War there was another big urban migration, which continued into the 1950s.

Domestic work was the first area into which African working women entered. This was, firstly, because it was the one area where they encountered the least resistance, either from men or women of the other racial groups. Secondly, in the context of South Africa's racist society, every White family aspires to have a servant, hence there was an ever-growing demand. In Johannesburg and other centres the churches set up Native Girls' Industrial Schools, where girls were taught the rudiments of housekeeping. By the 1920s, African female domestic servants were becoming the norm on the Rand and other urban centres.

In contrast, the White women who came to the towns came as wives either of the *nouveau riche* capitalists or of working men. From 1902, a group of Empire Loyalists organised

the immigration of some 11 500 British domestic servants, as they saw it, to bolster the English element on the Rand. Most of these soon left domestic service to become wives to immigrant British workers, or found vocations as hoteliers or eating-house owners. It is only with the arrival of large numbers of South African-born White women in the cities in the 1920s, that one can speak of a female industrial working class.

The expansion of the South African manufacturing industry took place through windfalls and the misfortunes of international capitalism.

The first big leap was occasioned by the First World War, when South Africa was cut off from foreign imports, and local manufacturers got the chance to establish a market. The next growth spurt came about through the installation of the Nationalist-Labour Pact in 1924. The government of Hertzog was committed to industrial development; state funds set up ISCOR and ESCOM, tariff barriers protected local industry from outside competitors, and anti-working class legislation kept the lid on industrial relations. By the time Hertzog went into the coalition with Smuts, in 1935, there was already a substantial female working class, based mainly in manufacturing and in the services.

According to the 1936 census of the African population, there were 2 329 681 African women over the age of ten in the Union. Of this number, 1 919 319, or 82.4%, were gainfully employed, of whom 1 659 349, or 86.5% were engaged in agriculture. Of the total number of African women engaged in agriculture, 1 618 746 were classified as peasants.

Of the 1 919 319 in gainful employment, 12.7% were in domestic service. 82% of these domestic servants were under the age of 40.

In the industrial work force African women were distributed as follows:

Unskilled workers	2 609
o Laundry workers	814
s Dressmakers	221
n Machinists	100
d Potters	89

There were a total number of 4 335 African women classified as professionals, and of these 3 441 were teachers and 571 were nurses.

The tables give a general idea of trends in the female labour force between 1936 and 1970.

It is readily evident that there is a historical trend of growing female participation in the economy. This is however conditioned by the racist character of South African capitalism. Thus, during the period of rapid industrialisation, though employers sought women workers, they exercised racial selectivity. White women were the first to be drawn into the industrial work force in large numbers, then Coloured women; last were the African women. It was during and after the Second World War, when African urbanisation made a quantitative leap, that African women were brought into the factories in large numbers. Between 1951 and 1970, it is estimated that the African women industrial work force increased by 23%. Despite this growth, the African women still constitute a tiny minority of the industrial proletariat. As the figures indicate, the majority are confined to domestic and agricultural work. In the professions the African women are concentrated in two professions, teaching and nursing. The relatively low figures for White women in the higher professions is indicative of the sexual discrimination affecting women in general in the society.

When one therefore speaks of one out of every three African workers being a woman, we have to be clear exactly what we are referring to. Well-nigh 80% of these are domestics and farm workers. According to figures released recently, the same picture is beginning to apply to Coloured women in the Western Cape agricultural areas (*Die Burger*, 2nd February 1983, as quoted in the *ANC Newsbriefing* No 9, February 1983).

Domestic workers are directly employed by persons of their own gender, the proverbial 'White madams' of South Africa. Though one may speak of a cleavage between men and women in all patriarchal societies, in the South African context, this cleavage is clearly subordinate to a more fundamental cleavage between

White and Black, and the cleavage between employer and worker. The position of the majority of Black working women bears this out. In their day-to-day working lives they confront not men, but White women employers as the immediate and visible exploiter and oppressor. This experience must, therefore, necessarily inform any strategy for the emancipation of women in our country. In defining the decisive interests of women in our society, the yardstick must be the interests of the Black women.

Gender and Class

The over-arching importance of the national question should not, however, blind us to the class differences and conflicts which also affect relations within the Black communities. Such differentiation will assume greater importance in the context of the regime's 'total strategy,' which involves concessions — such as the 99-year lease and opening up of central trading areas — for the Black middle strata.

While it is perfectly clear that the aspiring Black bourgeoisie was smothered in the cradle with Land Acts, exclusion from the cities, and restrictions on its rights to trade, in the present climate the regime's policies are aimed at encouraging this stratum to perceive its sectional interests as separate from those of the rest of the community. Amongst the Asian community, where a visible and substantial class of merchant capitalists has emerged, though constrained by innumerable racist laws, it is evident that the property-owning layers have a keen sense of their particular interests.

Amongst the Africans the petit-bourgeoisie consists primarily of professionals, a handful of small property-owners, the commercial sector in the urban townships and the few African business executives who have appeared since the adoption of the Sullivan Code by imperialist investors. With the exception of the latter, the African petit-bourgeoisie operates almost completely within the African community. Confined to the poorest parts of town, threatened by the arbitrary powers that municipal, provincial and national state officials wield like a sword of Damocles over their heads, they are insecure in their careers

and pursuit of their business. African women of these layers, though they might be exempted from the more degrading aspect of 'Native Law' and African customs and traditions, are limited in their opportunities by their gender. In addition to restriction to one or two professions, they are invariably paid less than their male counterparts in the same jobs. Traditional attitudes also greatly influence the investment parents are prepared to make in the training of their daughters. After all, many parents assume, if she 'makes a good match' (that is, marries a well-to-do man) her future is secured.

The hold of traditional attitudes affects Asian women perhaps the most viciously, by discouraging their seeking work outside the home.

In spite of their small numbers, the petit bourgeois African women are the moulders of opinion and leaders of African women's community organisations. They have thus left their stamp on all of these; the counsel of moderation, the politics of indecision and conciliation, which mark these movements, derive from this influence. The role model for the petty bourgeois African woman is the White suburban woman, whose frivolities and foibles they emulate with an embarrassing mimicry. Specific individuals from these layers have, however, written many a glowing chapter in the history of the liberation movement.

The loyalties of the petit-bourgeois Black woman are today being assiduously solicited by every fraction of the White monopolists. Mrs Bridget Oppenheimer these days hosts teas to which she invites Black professional women and the wives of Soweto notables; the Mayor of Durban entertains the wives of the executive board of the African Chamber of Commerce; no western embassy function in Pretoria is considered complete without its token number of invited Black guests. Every effort is being bent to cultivate a collaborationist layer that will prove willing to deflect the radical demands of the masses. The temptations for the petit-bourgeoisie to pursue its own sectional aims are legion, especially when weighted against the prospect of a protracted liberation war



whose outcome, in their terms, is uncertain.

The African Working Women

Unlike the middle layers, the African working women have to spend most of their working lives interacting with the other racial communities. Such contact is in itself liberating and helps to forge new points of contact and mutual interests, as workers cross the boundaries of race. This was most vividly demonstrated during the strikes in Cape Town, where joint action did more to dissolve the hostilities that separated African and Coloured workers than thousands of propaganda tracts.

According to some estimates, 95% of the African women in the clothing industry are unionised. The Food and Canning Workers' Unions, historically containing a high percentage of women workers, are exemplary for their militancy and commitment to the liberation struggle. The discipline of the labour process, the importance of united action and the need for organisation, taught by the experience of the working class, have made the Black industrial working women a formidable force, despite their numbers. It is not surprising that the most outstanding women militants of our movement are drawn from their ranks.

The domestic workers, though comprising

a substantial majority of urban working women, are isolated from each other in their daily lives. Until recently it has proved rather difficult to organise them, for precisely this reason.

South African agricultural workers are the most exploited and most brutally oppressed layers of the entire Black population. They are also the most defenceless, because they are in the main untouched by political campaigns. Surveys undertaken in the past two years have brought into the public eye the scandalous conditions on the farms of the Transvaal, Natal, the Free State and the Cape. Conditions are so bad that even in areas of high unemployment, the jobless prefer the uncertainties of the dole queue and the humiliations of the pass office to work on the farms.

A researcher for the Catholic Bishops' Conference found that in the South-Eastern Transvaal farm workers were earning the paltry sum of R10.00 per month, plus a bag of mealie meal. Domestic workers in the farm homesteads were being paid R1.00 for three days of washing. Other investigators in 1982 found that it was not uncommon that farm workers were paid no cash wage whatsoever. Their hours of work, apparently regulated only by the rhythms of the sun, were sometimes as long as 17 hours a day. The housing provided was criminally inadequate, and child labour was legally permitted.

In areas of Natal, researchers found that the tenant labour system, though technically banned, was alive and well. Some 200 000 labour tenants are still being exploited in terms of labour contracts with White farmers. These entail the shockingly low wage of R5.00 per month paid to the family head, plus a bag of mealie meal. The adult sons of the tenants' family are paid half this sum plus a half bag of mealie meal. Wives, daughters and children under age are not paid a penny! During the six months of the year that the tenants are not required to work on the farm, they are allowed to enter the migrant labour market. Researchers found that it was remittances from migrants that in fact sustain the families of tenants throughout the year.

Labour Bureaux

The labour bureaux system, which empowers the regime to designate a worker as a farm labourer in perpetuity, is the chief means by which farm workers are chained to their jobs. Once a worker's pass has been endorsed to the effect that he is a farm worker, it is virtually impossible to transfer to some other category of work.

The peasant women of the reserves and Bantustans present the starkest picture of exploitation and degradation. Trapped in these hell-holes of poverty and economic backwardness, they are forced to live as widows, though they have husbands, are impressed into being mother and father to their families, and consequently can be neither. South African capitalism has assigned them the role of producing labour units. Whereas in the past it was supposed that the peasant woman supplemented the income of her migrant husband, it is clear that the total collapse of the Bantustan subsistence economies means that the majority of peasant women rely on cash sent home by migrant breadwinners. We must understand the 'illegal' urban migration of African women and their families in this context. The so-called 'squatter camps' at Crossroads, Unibell, etc, represent sites of heroic struggles by peasant women, who flatly refuse to be consigned to the darkness of the Bantustans, away from their husbands, away from life, deprived of even the common decencies of subsistence. They represent, on the one hand, the determination of the landless peasant to become part of the urban working class, and, on the other hand, the Canute-like insistence of the regime that they remain peasants.

In spite of their differing class situations, Black women in general share a number of disabilities peculiar to them as members of the oppressed nationalities and as a gender group. The interwoven steel net of colour and gender has to be seriously addressed in the definition of a strategy for women's emancipation. We need to focus on, and identify, a number of specifically feminine issues — the wrongs suffered by women — which will have to be redressed by the victorious liberation move-

ment. A number of these have already been formulated in the Women's Charter, which forms a sound basis on which we can begin to elaborate.

The Emancipation of Women and National Liberation

An unfortunate attitude has taken root in our movement against what people loosely term 'feminism,' and sometimes 'Women's Lib.' More often than not this attitude shields and is a convenient cover for traditionalist attitudes against the rights of women, and masks the fears and inadequacies of men who feel threatened by the loss of the power they at present exercise over women.

Traditionalist attitudes and opposition to 'feminism' in South Africa have in one sense acquired legitimacy because of the history of the White suffragette movement in our country. Historically, this movement has been linked to reactionary and racist causes, which have in a way tarnished the very issue of women's rights.

The first recorded incident where women demanded the right to vote occurred in Natal in 1843. A group of Voortrekker women, dedicated to the proposition that there 'shall be no equality between White and Black in the church or the state,' presented a petition to the British governor of Natal, demanding a full franchise for White women. The present-day Kappie Kommando draws its inspiration from such traditions.

Subsequent efforts to extend the vote to women were, so to speak, affected by this evil birth sign. White suffragettes and their champions almost invariably appealed to racist sentiment in presenting their case. Thus, J M Orpen, the member of the Cape Parliament for Wodehouse, in 1895, argued in support of his motion that the Franchise and Ballot Act include qualified women, that it was inconceivable that a respectable White woman could not vote, while her Black male servant could.

The South African Labour Party, which adopted women's suffrage as one of its planks, compensated for this apparent liberalism and

enlightenment with a viciously anti-African 'Native policy,' which included elements of what is now the Bantustan policy, job reservation and forced removals.

The Women's Enfranchisement Act, passed in May 1930, was intended by Hertzog to help dilute the weight of the Cape African and Coloured vote. Needless to say it applied exclusively to White women. These associations give unwarranted credence to anti-women traditionalist attitudes.

But the reactionary nature of White bourgeois feminism should not be allowed to detract from the sound principles of women's emancipation, any more than Botha's calling himself a 'nationalist' tarnishes the image of nationalism in general.

It is clear that there are a number of gender specific disabilities suffered by women. To point to these is no more divisive than recognising that national oppression affects the Black communities differently. Thus, no one can decry our emphasis on the Pass Laws, which are specific to Africans, as an issue around which the entire liberation movement should rally.

Black women, especially the African women, are the victims of threefold oppression. One dimension of this is the traditions and mores of their own communities. It is our fear of addressing these retrograde customs and traditions which lies at the root of people's opposition to the issues of women's emancipation. It is clear that this is a responsibility we can no longer shirk. Doubtless such an exercise will encounter resistance. But, as is the case with all new ideas, those who have been brought up with the old feel uncertain and threatened by this process. If these ideas have any value, they will in the end win converts and become generally accepted in our ranks. What is absolutely impermissible is that we censor or outlaw radical ideas merely because they cause some of us discomfort.

Within our Black communities, it is patriarchal attitudes and institutions that oppress and degrade our women. It is high time we had the courage to grasp the nettle and subject all these to withering criticism. The ones best suited to the task are the women from the communities in question.

The struggle for freedom is at base an act of refusal, the refusal to be submissive and to defer to those who exercise power, the refusal to bend the knee to the tyrant! By this very act of refusal the liberation fighter reclaims the humanity the oppressor seeks to strip her/him of. The wholeness Black women seek can be attained only by our throwing off the tattered garments of submissiveness and obedience to men. Only by asserting our rights as equal human beings will Black womanhood be able to make her own special contribution to the reclamation of our common humanity.

In conclusion I'd like to quote the words of Salvador Samayoa of the FMLN of El Salvador:

"It is a mistake or danger for the movement to begin to forge the new person, the new society at the point of taking power. This is not possible unless, during the process of the military-political struggle, the organisation's lifestyle involves new social relations."

The most basic social relationship is that between man and woman. This is the challenge that the Year of the Women presents to us.

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BISHOP TUTU: A PROFILE

It is said that Archbishop Trevor Huddleston once said: "The Church sleeps on, though sometimes it talks in its sleep." He was referring to the churches in South Africa in the 1950s. Today the situation has changed, and if there is one person who embodies that change in the attitude of the churches it is Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born on October 7th 1931 in Klerksdorp, a town seventy miles west of Johannesburg. His African name, 'Mpilo,' means 'health,' and his grandmother gave it to him because he was a delicate baby who was not expected to survive. "That was my first commitment to faith," says Bishop Tutu.

His father was a Methodist school teacher, teaching in a primary school. Desmond Tutu was educated at a Swedish Mission boarding school at Roodepoort, after which he attended a secondary school. When he was 12 the

family moved to Johannesburg, where his mother took a job as a cook in a school for the blind. He found himself surrounded by compassion and dedication. In 1945, at the age of 14, he contracted tuberculosis, and spent twenty months in a Sophiatown hospital run by the fathers of the Community of the Resurrection. It was here that he met the man who was to have the biggest single influence on his life, Father Trevor Huddleston, a parish priest in the Black ghetto of Sophiatown (now designated a 'white area' and renamed 'Triomf') whose magnetism and commitment made him the best known and (by Blacks) the best-loved church leader. The impact of Trevor Huddleston on Desmond Tutu can be seen in the fact that Desmond Tutu named his son Trevor in tribute to Huddleston. Archbishop Trevor Huddleston is now President of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement.

In 1950, after recovering from TB, Tutu

Collection Number: AK2117

DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location: **Johannesburg**

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