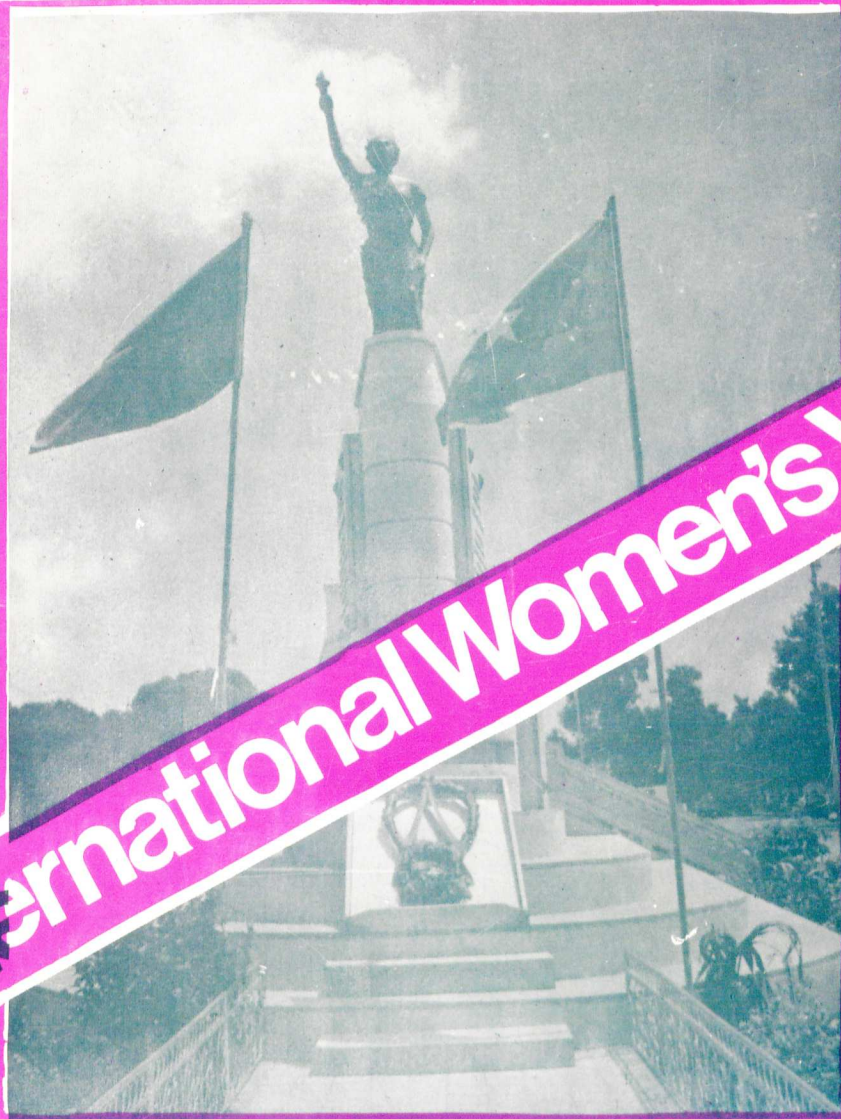


SOMALI WOMEN IN SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION



International Women's Year

1975

Published by the Women's Section of the
Political Office of the Presidency S.R.C.



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— International Women's Year
1975



MOGADISHU
APRIL - 1975

PUBLISHED BY THE WOMEN'S SECTION OF
THE POLITICAL OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENCY, SRC



*Jaalle Major-General MOHAMED SIAD BARE
President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council
of the Somali Democratic Republic*

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the United Nations General Assembly's decision to name this year 1975 as the International Women's Year, the international and regional women organisations have begun seriously implementing the resolution on equality development, and peace for women all over the world. Thus prior to the international conference which is due to be held in June in Mexico and Berlin (G.D.R.) in October, this year, the Pan-African Women's Organisation has prepared to gather its forces in order to be able unanimously to have their say at that conference.

At the second conference of the Cuban Women's Federation held in Havana on November 28 last year, where some of Africa's progressive forces of women's organisations, including that of Somalia, were represented, the Pan-African Women's Organization requested that this year, the regional seminar on Africa be held in Mogadishu within the framework of the international women's year resolution.

Since Somalia is a socialist country and its Revolutionary leader, Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siad Barre, is the current chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the request was put before the Somali Government by the Somali Women's Section of the Political Office, which participated in that conference. And despite the fact that the country had badly been hit by a serious drought the Revolutionary Government wholeheartedly accepted the proposal of the Pan-African Women's Organization, because Somalia had pledged five years before not any more to be left behind the mainstream of the progressive revolutionary movement of the world. It accepted to host this conference and bear all financial responsibilities in terms of accommodation food and all other facilities available.

The credit for the preparation of the conference goes to President Siad, the Supreme Revolutionary Council, the Council of Secretaries, the Women's Section of the Political Office and the Somali people as a whole.

The Somali Women fought side by side with their brothers in liberating the country from the yoke of colonialism and imperialism. They also struggled against the malicious and corrupt regimes which oppressed our people for a period of nine years.

In the revolutionary era, the Somali Women have been emancipated, and they have put all their efforts to transform the country socially, economically, politically and ideologically, thanks to the Somalia's 21 October Revolution.

The Somali Revolutionary Women do not only participate in the national revolutionary activities — such as the many successful campaigns waged throughout the country, but they also take an active part in the international solidarity movement. They have actively contributed with men to the manifestation of solidarity with the African Liberation Movements, with the Palestine and Arab people, with Chile and the Latin American people, with Vietnam and the Indochinese peoples.

They maintain constant relations and participate in the meetings of all progressive and democratic Women's Organizations throughout the world.

In the following pages, an attempt is made to put our Women's role and activities in the Revolutionary era in the proper perspective of the Government's declared policy of Scientific Socialism which we consider is the only road to rapid social and economic development. And their contributions to the efforts of nation — building our African female guests will have ample opportunity to witness with their own eyes. We say welcome to all the delegates, and wish them a happy sojourn.

(Lt. Col. Abdulkadir Hagi Mahamed)
The Secretary of the Political Office of the
Presidency of the SRC and Member of the
Political Committee of the SRC

SOCIALISM AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

The second Charter of the Somali Revolution proclaims the Somali nation's choice for Scientific Socialism as the basis of our revolutionary society. In a solemn political statement, the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, Jaalle Mohamed Siad Barre declared: «We chose Scientific Socialism because it is the only way for the rapid transformation of the country into a developed and economically advanced nation». It is therefore necessary for us to reflect briefly on the relationship between Scientific Socialism and the quest for women emancipation and equality.

CLASS STRUGGLE

As European society changed from feudalism to capitalism, two essential social classes came to exist: **The bourgeoisie** who own the means of production and exploit the labour of **the proletariat** who are forced to sell their labour for a living. Marx and Engels were able to observe the resulting class struggles; through material historical research, they were able to analyze class formations and class struggles in previous epochs — those of slavery and feudalism in particular. Through this scientific observation of evolution and revolution in human societies, they were able to formulate the methods and principles of what came to be called scientific socialism. They saw history moving towards a confrontation between the minority exploiters and the majority whose labour was exploited. They took the position of the majority, the oppressed workers, as opposed to the exploiting bourgeoisie. They sketched the outlines of a future socialist society which would be based on working class principles. Therefore the need to respect and

love labour in society where work leads to collective benefits where the exploitation of man by man has been eliminated. Among other things, this involves the collectivization (nationalisation) of the means of production — land, labour and industries.

Marx and Engels were also the first to point out that European capitalism was exporting itself abroad in its search for profitable investments, cheap labour, raw materials and markets. It was V. I. Lenin, however, who applied Marxist analysis to capitalism which had developed from a relatively competitive form to a monopoly phase. Imperialism represents the monopoly stage of capitalism.

Through imperialism, European capitalism has come to be extended to all the corners of the world. In the form of colonial or neo-colonial capitalism, it has not led to industrialisation as genuine capitalism did in Europe and in North America. It has created a commercial revolution — the emergence of commodities, exchange values, markets — and it has also created social classes: a pseudo - bourgeoisie, an embryonic working class, a large class of unemployed masses and a predominantly large class of peasants. It has led to urbanisation without industrialisation. It was Lenin who pointed out that this would lead to class struggles which would initially take the form of national liberation struggles.

This may lead to formal independence when the pseudo-bourgeoisie takes over state power and proceeds to merely «Africanise», «Arabize» or «Asianise» capitalism hoping that thereby it has ceased to be capitalism. On the contrary, in its perverted form, neo-colonial capitalism simply perpetuates the development of underdevelopment and all its horrible consequences in economic, political, social and cultural spheres of society. Genuine independence requires, as a basic pre-condition, the liberation of the means of production from neo-colonial control and manipulation. That is why authentic national liberation must lead to socialism which, among other things, addresses itself to the question of ownership of the means of production.

On account of its brevity, this explanation is overly simplified. Nevertheless, it gives Jaalle Mohamed Siad Barre's

solemn statement quoted above a historical context. Scientific Socialism represents a historical necessity, not an abstract choice.

SOCIALIZATION

Taking the position of the exploited majority, the proletariat in capitalist nations, and the working class and peasants in the areas exploited by imperialism (as Lenin came to observe), Scientific Socialism or Marxism - Leninism could not ignore the condition of the women of the oppressed majority. These women suffer from double exploitation. As is characteristic of the Marxist - Leninist approach, the roots of the secondary status of women are analyzed in terms of their relatively unequal relations to the means of production. The so-called liberal or petty-bourgeois analysis of the status of women usually falls into discussing socialization, psychology, interpersonal relations, or the role of marriage as a social institution. Scientific socialist analysis does discuss these issues but it does not consider them as the **primary or fundamental factors**. In a dialectical or two-sided formulation, Marxism-Leninism sees these personal and psychological factors deriving from the particular relation to production, and a change in the latter will be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for changing the former. At the level of superstructures the exploitation of women takes legal, political, religious and ideological forms. Superficially, it is sometimes even alleged that women are exploited more by prejudice than by political-legal means. These superstructural constraints oblige the movement for women's equality to, initially at least, take the form of a direct fight against discrimination in voting, in marriage laws and so on. Women should, of course, not wait to demand freedom from discrimination even though this does not get at the roots of the problem. However, whatever compromises they might make with regards to tactics, at the level of long-range strategy, they should not lose sight of the fact that there is a material basis for women's status: women are not merely discriminated against, they are exploited. Removing exploitation requires a struggle at the level of socioeconomic structures of society.

At this point let us reproduce certain excerpts from the writings of the leading exponents of Scientific Socialism. We shall comment on these quotations which present the essence of the woman question from a Marxist-Leninist approach.

In the **Communist Manifesto**, Karl Marx and F. Engels wrote «On what foundation is the present bourgeois family based? On capital and private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians and in public prostitution.....» The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production.

Engels in the **Origin of the Family** observes: «As regards the legal equality of husband and wife in marriage, the position is no better. The legal inequality of the two partners, bequeathed to us from earlier social conditions, is not the cause but the effect of the economic oppression of the woman.... Household management lost its public character (under capitalism). It no longer concerned society. It became a private service, the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production.»

V.I. Lenin, in **Women and Society** declared «We say that the emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves and similarly, the emancipation of women workers must be brought about by the women workers themselves. Women workers themselves should see to the development of such institutions, and their activities in this field will lead to a complete change from the position they formerly occupied in capitalist society.»

THE EMANCIPATION

On the **Emancipation of Women**, V. I. Lenin wrote: «Wherever there are landowners, capitalists or merchants, women cannot be the equal of men even before the law..... (Moreover) Equality before the law is not necessarily equality in fact. We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in actual fact. For this working woman must take in increasing part in the

administration of socialised enterprises and in the administration of the State.»

In the same study, Lenin went on to observe: «Not with standing all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a **domestic slave**, because **petty housework** crushes, strangles, stultifies, and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerveracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real **emancipation of women**, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the State power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather its **wholesale transformation** into a large scale socialist economy begins.»

Thus we see the historical materialist conception of women's emancipation. We see the dialectical acceptance of a struggle for legal and formal equality but the insistence on genuine economic equality; we see an emphasis on the principle of women's self-emancipation through the struggle for national and social liberation. The question of freeing women from unpaid, domestic labour is crucial.

The appearance of commodity production in capitalist and capitalist oriented colonial (& neo-colonial) societies has transformed the social division of labour. As Engels points out, most household labour in such capitalist (and colonial) society remains in the pre-market stage. This is the work which is reserved for women and it is in the assignment of household work as the function of a special category «women» that this group does stand in a different relation to production than «men».

Scientific Socialism lays the basis for the inferior status of women in a society in which, among other things, money determines value; women's household work is not worth money, in the capitalist sense, this work is valueless work. Women mostly work outside the money economy. Even though in sheer quantity, household labour, including child care, constitutes a huge amount of socially necessary production, it is still not considered «real work». It therefore follows that women, who do this valueless work, can hardly be expected to be worth as much as men, who work for money.

That is why, one can say that in pre-colonial (pre-capitalist) African women were more equal to men. There were no exchange relations based on money, the public employment of men who earn money, and the private domestication of women who become responsible for the home and the family. This is why, in his **Origin of the Family**, Engels remarks : «The division of labour between the two sexes (in communal societies) is determined by causes entirely different from those that determine the status of women in capitalist society. Peoples whose women have to work much harder than we would consider proper often, have far more real respect for women than our capitalists have for theirs.»

The analysis of women subjugation in the socialisation process is important : that is, in family upbringing, education and in matters of law, religion, culture and mores of society. But these secondary factors must always be dialectically related to the fundamental relation of women to the means of production. Equal access to jobs outside the home — socially productive labour — is one of the preconditions for women's liberation. But this will not in itself be sufficient to give equality to women.

The work in the home should not remain forever a matter of private production and remain the responsibility of women, otherwise working women would simply carry, a double work-load.

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

A historical dialectical understanding obliges us to see the need to wage a two-sided struggle. At the level of material conditions, there is the need to develop large-scale operations that would lessen the burden of domestic labour. But it is also necessary to wage an ideological struggle — a cultural revolution. It is difficult to radically change the habits of those of us who have been brought up in the old ways. But an excellent start can be made with the socialization of future generations. If parents do not educate the child, ever since birth, to cooperate in household chores, when he becomes an adult it will be more difficult for him to be a true comrade for his wife, to succeed in marriage with an emancipated

partner and, if the girl is not educated in the same sense, both of them will erroneously believe that women's life is limited to the home.

Keeping a woman in bondage results in a concealed form of revenge. Her backwardness and ignorance retard children and undermine the revolutionary vision and determination of her husband. This is revenge at the family level. At the national level, it seriously impedes all development efforts. As President Mohamed Siad Barre pointed out in a speech on September 3rd, 1972: «We in Somalia simply cannot afford the luxury of relegating more than half of our population to inferiority; given the paucity of our manpower we are forced to tap all the human resources available.»

Guided by the genuine humanism of Scientific Socialism, socialist countries have been able to achieve remarkable progress in all aspects of women emancipation and equality.

The constitutions of all socialist countries today guarantee to women equal rights in all fields of economic, social, political and cultural life. In actual life, figures and statistics prove the progress attained in actually implementing these provisions. We find them progressive in providing a fair marriage and family law, giving women equal rights of inheritance; humane labour codes and so on. The employment of women in socially productive labour is encouraged and practised to a remarkable degree. Women participate in administration and in political life. Socialist states provide health and child-care centres for the protection of the mother and child. In the field of education, socialist nations lead the world in providing for women's education.

The authenticity of a revolution is highlighted by the principles it adopts on the question of women's emancipation. The success of a revolution can be judged by the level of emancipation of women. This issue provides a crucial yardstick to distinguish empty nationalist reformism from Scientific Socialism.

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

I. Background

Twenty seven years ago, many Somali nationalists fell dying for freedom, among whom the name of that patriotic woman, HAWA OSMAN TAKO has gone down in history. On the 11th January of this year that day was again celebrated as usual. The occasion was used to celebrate the International Women's Year, and the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council deemed it fitting to announce on that occasion at the Football Stadium where the celebrations were held, the decision of the two Councils, the Supreme Revolutionary Council and the Council of Secretaries, that hence forward Somali women had been proclaimed to be equal in their rights and particularly in the question of inheritance. The President also admonished those reactionaries, the ignorant and the narrow-minded who might complain about this decision.

If we go back a little in history, it will be clear that in the past, in time of war, Somali women fought side by side with their fellow men and in time of peace they took care of the children but also even then their counsel to men proved very useful.

But after independence they were completely ignored and confined to the daily chores of their houses.

The Revolution has ushered in for women a period of equality with men. They have the right to work both mentally and manually. In the Administration, they have equal pay and they even have paid maternity leaves.

Politically too, Somali women, for the first time, were permitted to take an active part in the politics of their country.

In 1971 a women's Organization was established by Presidential Decree as one of the branches of the Political Office. The purpose of this organization was clearly stated by the President on the occasion of the celebration of Women's Day on March 3, 1972. He said:

«We have recently passed the decree permitting the establishment of social organizations, one of which is the women's Organization. The purpose behind this is not, as you can tell, what we have witnessed in the past. It is meant in good sincerity to give ample opportunity and the necessary facilities to our women so that they can organize themselves, cultivate their talents and render their duties to the nation in the most effective manner.»

From that date, women became active members of the workers and youth organizations in every district and region.

Women receive regular political orientation with a view of enabling them to become aware of their conditions and duties and contribute to national development.

In the country several campaigns have been launched against tribalism, illiteracy and on Socialism and Labour, and in all these they have acquitted themselves to the full satisfaction of the Somali nation. They have been awarded a SILVER MEDAL and several certificates of honour. The silver medal was the first of its kind to be given to any organization in 1972.

In the field of industry, they have proved themselves to be equal, if not better sometime, than their male counterparts, and they have always been willing to increase their production capacity. Women work in the Sugar Factory at Jowhar and the Meat Factory, the Skin and Hides Factory and the Fruit Factory.

In the international arena, Somali women have good and strong relations with all progressive women. They are a member of the International Women's Democratic Federation (WIFD) and they have participated in the Organization's Conference held at Helsinki, (Bulgaria) and Berlin (GDR). They are also a member of the African Women's Organization (AAWK) and they have participated in their Conferences as well. Somali women are also attached to AAPSO and they

have attended their Conferences in Mogadishu.

Somali women have also good relations with Socialist countries, especially with the USSR.

The International Women's Day is observed on 8th March every year in Somalia along with the progressive women all over the world. This is also an occasion on which women leaders meet and discuss their achievements, problems and future plans with the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council and all other leaders of the country.

The tasks of the Somali women are going on smoothly and they work in this manner : the Central Women's Committee of every district meets once every week. The Executive members of the Women Committees also meet once every week with the workers, youth and the Chairman of the district's Committees.

All women also meet once every week in the Orientation Centres. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss plans for development of the various localities and to implement the instructions of the Political Office and the decisions of the Supreme Revolutionary Council.

It should also be noted that the Secretary-General of the Central Committees of all the districts hold meetings in the Political Office with the Chairman of the Women's Organizations and new resolutions emerge every time they meet.

II. Highlights of the activities of the Women's Organization during the period 1970 - 1975.

1970-1971

- General mobilization of women in all the districts.
- Construction of HAWA TAKO Monument by women workers and their financial contribution.
- Election of at least five women members to the Workers' Committee in every district.

1972

— Mass participation of women in the construction of centres in Mogadishu and all the other regions. This was in accordance with the Scientific Socialism Campaign.

— Establishment of a 15 — women Central Committee in every district.

— Seminars for women in all the thirteen districts of Mogadishu. Each district was the venue of these Seminars once a week and the subjects discussed were the history of Somali Women, the 21 October Revolution, how to fight tribalism, women and socialism, the building of a socialist family and so on. The Seminars lasted three months.

— 130 girls from all the districts were trained in Music and folkore dances to participate in the Third Anniversary of the October Revolution.

— Women took part in the National Fair and put on show many articles of interest. They won a Certificate of Honour for their efforts.

— Women were awarded a SILVER MEDAL on 27th November 1972 for their contribution to development.

— Women did research work on Women's Committees in Mogadishu and their activities : the way the Central Committees and their branches had been formed, the way they had worked together, the difficulties they had been confronted with, the level of their political consciousness and their knowledge of Scientific Socialism so as to enhance their general understanding of it. At the same time the Women's Branch of the Political Office held Seminars for the Central Committee, the first one being held in December 1972 and they lasted until 4th January. The Seminars were held at the district of Hawl Wadag in Mogadshu. Those who taught in these Seminars were well-versed in Scientific Socialism and they had come from the various Ministries and Autonomous Agencies.

This was followed by another series of Seminars which were held in April for the branches of the districts.

1973:

— A commemoration was held on 2nd January 1973 for the heroine HAWO TAKO and demonstrations in support were held.

— Women of knowledge were brought together and links were forged between them and the other women in general. The net result of this was that educated girls took part in the mass literacy campaign.

— International Women's Day was celebrated on 8th March at the National Theatre and some members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council and the Council of Secretaries attended the ceremony.

— On 25th January a short training course of two weeks for folklore women was held by the women's branch and they were taught the history of Somali culture and the principles of Scientific Socialism.

— A general course for all women activists was later launched on August 13. It is still effective. It is held every Friday at all the orientation Centres. Among the teachers are included sociologists, doctors, historians, lawyers, economists and such ladies as can contribute something on socialism and the policy of the Revolution.

— The Women's Branch finally prepared women participants in the 4th Anniversary of the October Revolution.

1974:

— The Programme for Political education was taken in hand at three different levels.

— January-April : Educated girls started giving lessons to workers on ideology.

— April : Women from the Region of Mogadishu visited the Regions of Bay and Lower Shabelle.

— June : A women delegation took part in the meeting of the OAU held in Mogadishu. The wives of Presidents and other dignitaries were present at the Conference.

— July : Seminars which were opened in the districts and regions gave an opportunity to women in the Central Committees and their branches to take an active part in the discussion.

— Each Friday, Orientation meetings are held in all the orientation centres. And at these, women teachers give lectures on politics to members of their sex.

— More women from all localities who had come to Mogadishu to participate in the International Women's Day met and exchanged ideas and experience.

— August, September, October, November and December: Somali women participated in the International Women's Seminars held in Budapest, Havana, New York, Moscow, Cairo and Algeris.

— In November 11, Somali women participated for the first time in the Conference of the Arab League Conference held in Cairo.

— In December : The Women's Branch and a Committee consisting of the SRC, the Secretaries of State and some legal experts undertook to prepare the Law on the family so as to prepare from this nucleus the ground for building a wholesome society.

1975:

Mogadishu has been selected as the venue for the African Women's Conference of this year.

— Finally, the Law on the family has been officially published in the Somali Daily 'XIDDIGTA OKTOOBAR' (OCTOBER STAR) on 19th March.



Health : attending the business of the newcomers.

1875-76

1875-76



WAKAALADDA FILIMADDA IYO MASAWIRADDA
JAMHUURIYADDA DIMOQRADIGA SOMALIYA
MUQDISHO

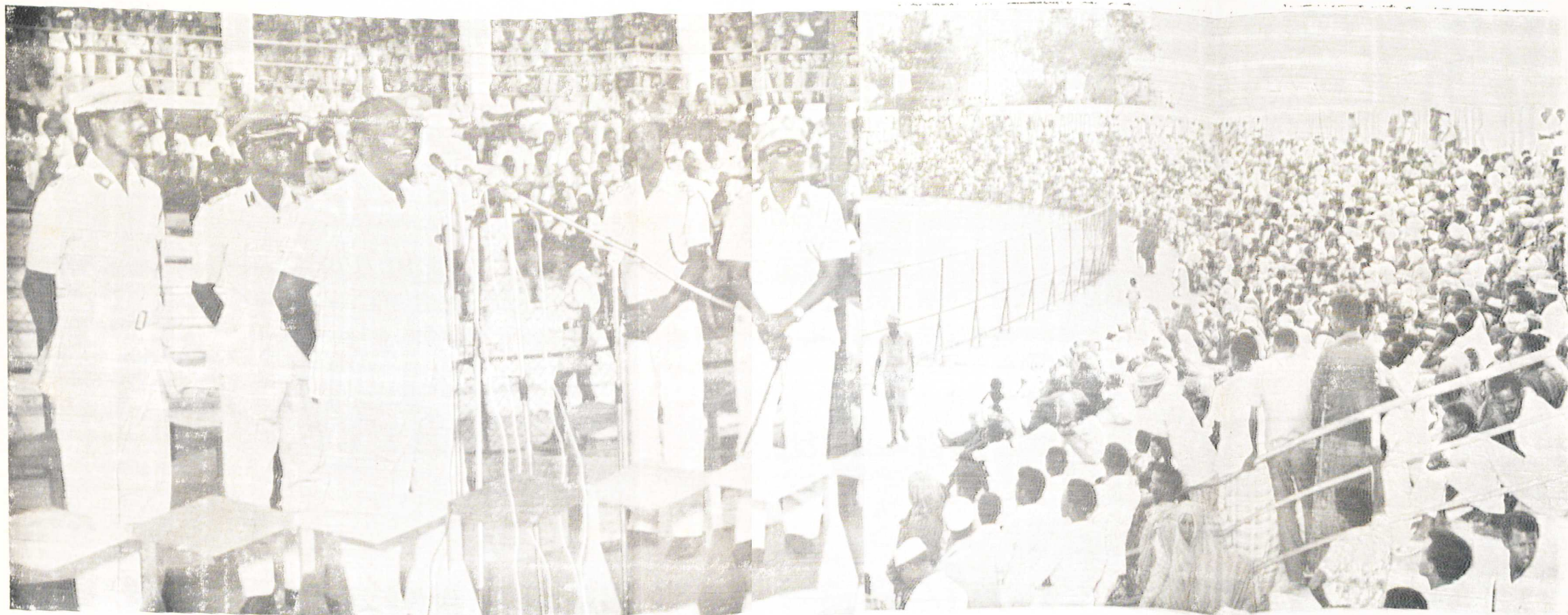
Industry : the Fruit Factory at Afgoi.



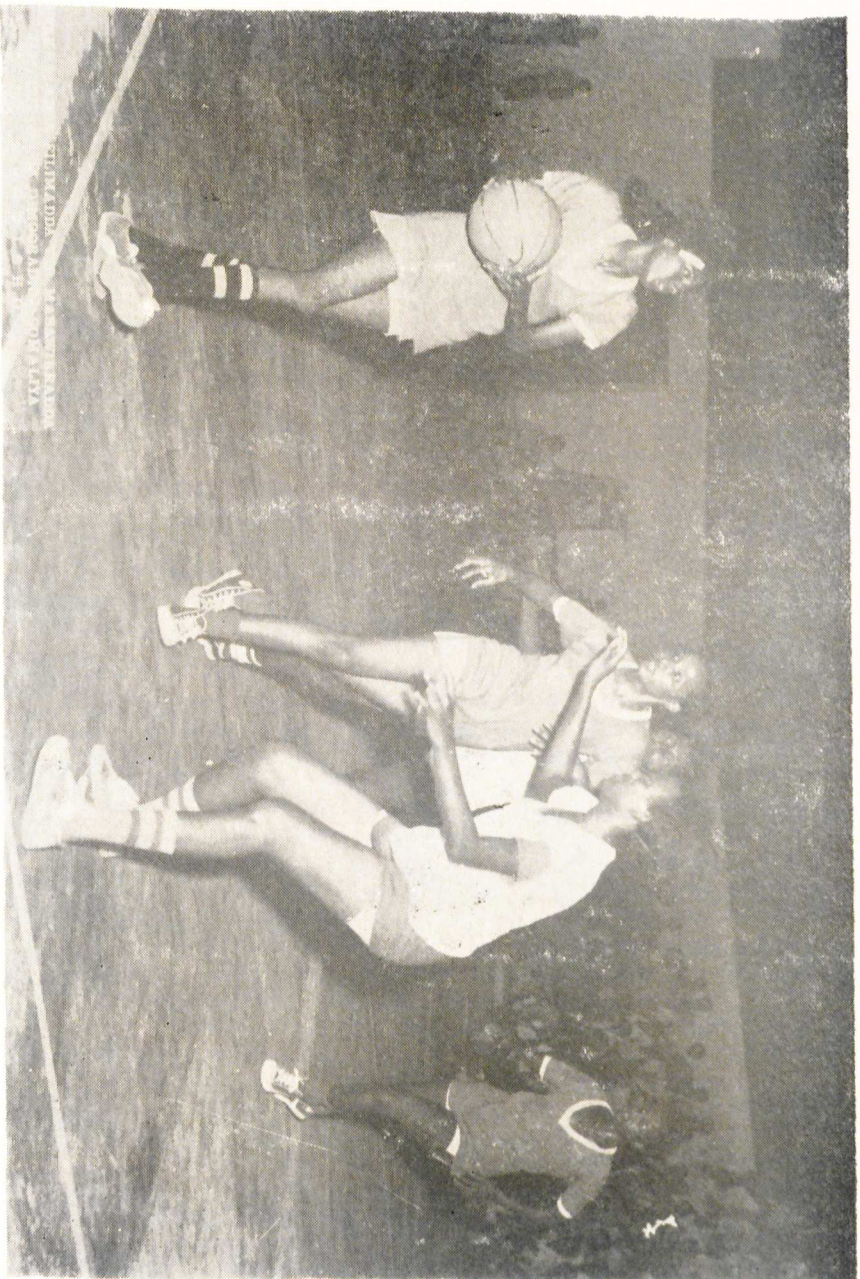
Women in the civil-service adopt para-military training
at Halane Orientation School.



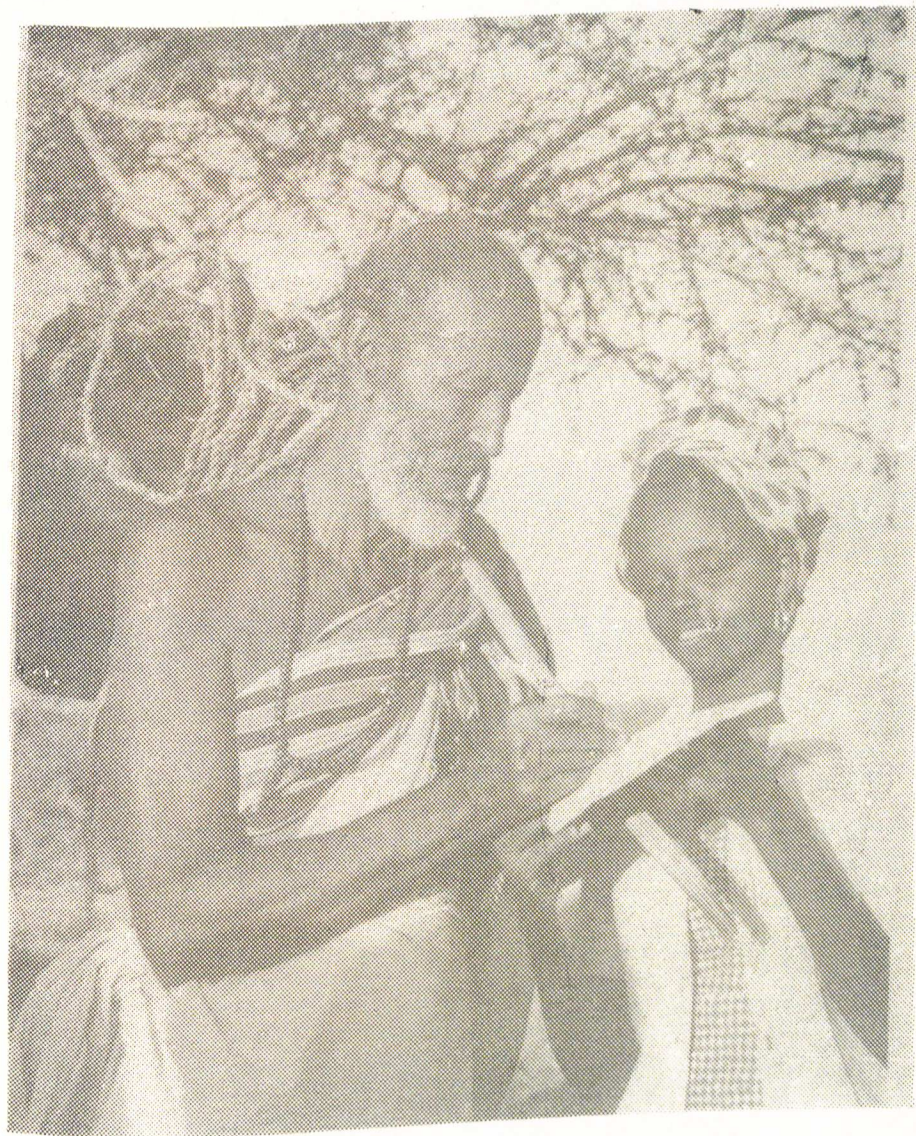
Rural illiteracy campaign : girls make their contributions.



The historic speech of Jaalle Siad on January 11, 1975 was a fulfillment of the aspirations of our emancipated women.



Girls take greater interest in sports.

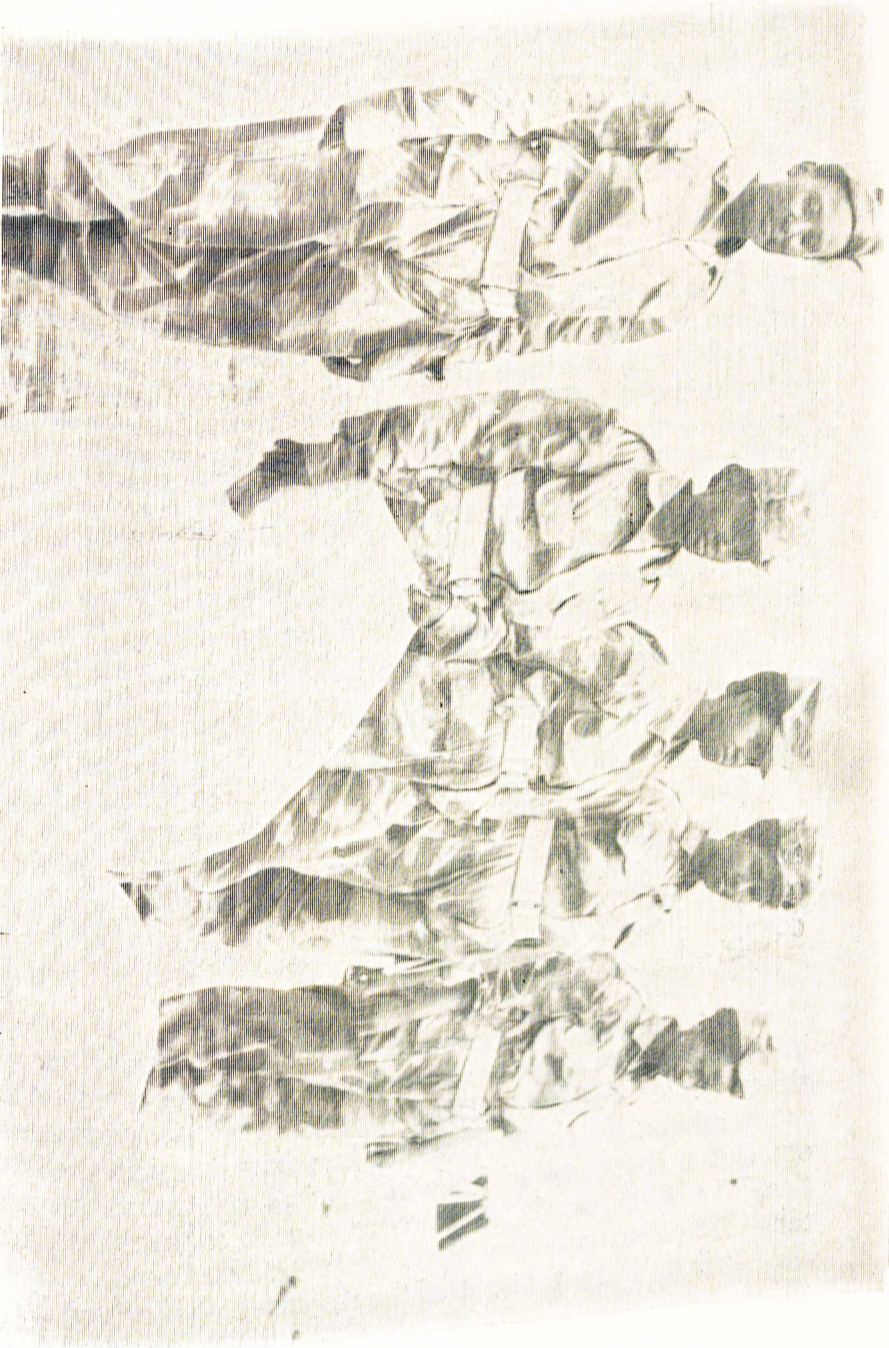


Rural illiteracy campaign in full swing.



Women are not only recipients but donors in the field of education.

Female paratroopers training courageously



WOMEN AND JUSTICE

The family is the basic unit of society and the mother enjoys an undisputed command in the family affairs in many countries and possesses a considerable influence in others. In this globe there is hardly any country where the mother is deprived of all saying in the day-to-day decisions affecting family life. The expression "motherland" and "mother tongue" used in most countries, are manifestations of the deep extent to which children attribute much of what they learn — including the sense of patriotism — outside the classroom to their mothers.

Perhaps the words of the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council Jaalle Major General Mohamed Siad Barre in his address to the closing ceremony of a 3-month political and ideological seminar for women from all residential quarters of Mogadishu (3rd Sept. 1972) can better explain the place of the mother in society : " . . . Women are the anchor of the family unit, that nest of love and intimacy without which man is either lost or at best warped. Without feminine tenderness to see us through the early years of life ours would be cruelly lonely world."

The shaping of the conduct and the behaviour of the child in the slow process of up-bringing is an area of almost exclusively female domain. Thus in Somali society as much as in many others, the mother teaches her daughter that she is less equal than her brother both in physical and mental capabilities. In other words, the mother engenders these traditional taboos, sex superstitions and male prejudices against women.

It is an irony that out of the respected and influential position in the family which is the initial cell of the society, mo-

ther is, all of a sudden, reduced to a low grade citizen in the wholesome social community — the second and the ultimate stage of the society. This inferior status of woman (the mother) finds expressions in social and legal norms — values and taboos — that have practical meanings in all aspects of the life of mankind. Out of these social values emerges the the Law, before which all are equal. Any utterance in favour of woman is easily destroyed by the simple reference to the principle : "All are equal before the Law".

The origin of these social taboos and their inherent laws, remained a sacrilege in the capitalist society, until scientific socialism had gained ground slightly over half a century ago. It is not by accident that Article one of the First Charter of the Revolution (21st October 1969) pledges **"to constitute a society based on the right of work and on the principle of social justice, considering the environment of social life of the Somali people"**. Neither is it political rhetoric intended solely to soothe the down public tension. But it is a well-meaning strategy of the Socialist Revolution, which must transform a patriarchal capitalist-oriented society into a socialist one.

Departing from this premises, President Siad reiterated this pledge in many of his speeches to the nation and to particular sections of the society in the subsequent years.

"Here in Somalia " President Siad told Afro-Asian Women representatives who participated in the third anniversary of the Revolution: «Women have a glorious history, and surely, you have seen the monument erected for those who sacrificed their lives during the liberation struggle, those who suffered torture, imprisonment and negation. Now, in the Revolutionary era, women play a major role from national construction to carrying the gun for the country's defence, from tilling the land to housekeeping. Our women and men are equal. When I declare this we have in mind that freedom must be built from the family base. The home must be liberated; women must be emancipate, children must be freed; society must be built from the base since everything has a foundation, society needs building from the family level.»

Most of Jaalle Siad's policy-making speeches, militant slogans and personal pleas, were addressed to mothers and sisters. If woman has to occupy her rightful place in society, President Siad teaches us, woman must be made conscious of the baselessness of her inferiority, before man is made convinced of the fallacy of male superiority.

«Both the production of manpower and the shaping of the young generation depends to a great extent upon the mother. It is therefore a primary condition that in order to aspire rightly to the realization of a Somali socialist society, the women should attain equality. All the fetters should be removed. They should receive full emancipation in all aspects of life. The Revolution guarantees such rights and decrees laws to this effect, the duty that falls on women in this present phase of our national development is to respond with full zest and enthusiasm like they have shown in the past," said President Siad in his address on the International Women's Day (8th March 1972). And added «They should understand and appreciate that before anything else, it is they who should aspire to rise and struggle for complete emancipation" President Siad certainly intends to encourage women to be in the forefront of the struggle for women's emancipation. He does not want to see women passively sit behind and wait for what their male counterparts would afford to offer them out of charity.

Nonetheless, many militant women and enlightened men might have grown impatient and suspected that the Revolution was given only lipservice to the cause of the emancipation of women. But the measures taken by the Somali Democratic Republic on 11th January 1975 dispelled all scepticism that militant might have had about the seriousness of the Revolution on the question of equality between men and women.

From this rather general outline of the situation before the Revolution and during its existence of 5 years let us proceed to examine certain specific aspects of the new family Law (No. 23 enacted on 11-1-1975 and published on the Official Bulletin No. I Vol. 3 dated 8-3-1975) from a very close quarter.

FAMILY LAW

The new Family Law is based on the Islamic Religion, particularly the Sect (**Madhab**) of the Imam Shafi'i. It is to be noted here that the Law, apart from improving the status of women, has unified all the religious norms that had hitherto remained unwritten. In the absence of a written Law there was room for discretion of the judges. Consequently different judges used to offer different interpretations of the same shariatic rules or they used to refer to different Books of Imam Shafi'i followers for the same case. This meant that what was permissible with Sheikh «X» was unacceptable with Sheikh «Y» in the next court room. Some Sheikhs show concern for the form and the letter of the Shariatic rules and regulations while others see the essence and the spirit of the laws as important. Naturally these two approaches can result in considerable discrepancy in court verdicts.

INTERPRETATION

A Judge was once presented with a case, so goes a famous tale, where a herd of cattle severely damage a farm. He ruled «a spear be thrust on the ground and that corn be poured until it was all covered to the top». At this juncture, the plaintiff asserted that cattle of the judge was among the herd in question. «Then in that case, it is permissible to lay the spear on the ground (**la jiifiyaana bannaan**) to be covered with corn» ruled the judge. Thus, a cone of corn almost two metres high (that is several quintals) could, in certain circumstances, be reduced into a narrow ribbon on the ground (less than a kilo!). Similarly, a marriage or a divorce could be validated by a Sheikh and invalidated by another.

This tale is told here not in order to suggest that our Sheikhs are unscrupulously venal judges. No, not at all! The inference is just to throw some light on the fact that solutions genuinely arrived at through different spectra could be poles apart. This means that an irreconcilable conflict may sometimes arise between the letter and the spirit of the law — any law. This formalistic approach would certainly deprive divine laws of God's wisdom and purpose of life. Under certain sub-sects

of the Imam Shafi'i Sect, the consent of the guardian of the girl is indispensable for a marriage, unless they are about 100 km away from the place of marriage. When a guardians' disapproval of a marriage is expected this distance (**masafo**) is artificially created by elopement. Some Sheikhs contend that since this distance is man-made with the premeditated intention to denude the letter of the spirit, such a marriage is invalid. To counter elopement, guardians rush to marry the girl to a man as soon as she vanishes. And in many cases the absence of time-record in marriage renders «which engagement first took place?» an extremely difficult question to establish. This was one of the aspects which badly needed uniformity. Article 21 of the new Law not only disqualifies marriages through elopement, but also punishes the man to three months jail or from 200-1000 shillings of fine. On the other hand, all the social and material basis that could force male contender to elope with his aspirant partner has been eliminated : «The consent of the Guardian could be sought only when the girl is between 16 and 18 years of age.»

MARRIAGE

As the law emanates from the fundamental concept of social justice, it considers marriage as a permanent social contract in which both the male and the female are equally responsible for its successful continuation. Article 4 (para 1) reads: **«Marriage is a contract between a man and woman, having equal rights and duties; its foundation are understanding and reciprocal respect between them in the creation of a united healthy family which is considered as the cornerstone of society.»** In order to ensure maturity, the marriage age of male and female was raised to 18 and the consent of the guardian has been dispensed with at this age and above. Articles 16 and 17 provide an exception whereby marriage could be concluded at the ages between 16 and 18 with guardian's consent but if the guardian objects, the judge may overrule and conclude the marriage, should he deem it necessary for certain genuine reasons.

Thus the status of the female has changed from being a mere negotiable commodity to becoming a partner who has equal say in the making of the family, in her destiny in other words. Article 2 (para 2) stipulates «No bride-prize should be paid as

condition to conclude a marriage, but it is permissible should anyone volunteers to pay it».

This conditional bride-prize has been a constant source of serious hinderance to establishing a marriage based on mutual love and consent of the couple. Many a girl was forcefully married to man — sometimes much older than her father — for the simple reason that he possesses, and offers, wealth; a marriage entered into under coercion of one partner and is motivated by the immediate material interests of another alone, will surely not last long. It will only add one more broken home to an already miserable society. To leave no room for ambiguity that may defeat the purpose of the Law, Article 7 emphasizes : «A marriage is invalid if one partner (or both) is forced, be it by physical or moral coercion . . . »

MONOGAMY

Before the introduction of the new Law, polygamy was practised widely. The Law abolishes polygamy as a matter of principle, but leaves the door open for man to marry a second — not a third or a fourth — wife only in certain carefully scrutinized situations. Article 13 sets the following conditions for the marriage of a second wife:

«No man is allowed to marry a second wife without prior authorization of Court; the Court can give such authorization only on the following conditions :

1. When it is established by a jury of doctors that the first wife is barren, and that he had no knowledge of this fact at the time of marriage.
2. When it is certified by a doctor that the first wife has a hopelessly chronic epidemic disease.
3. When she is sentenced to more than two years of imprisonment.
4. When she remains away from her home for a year without a genuine reason.
5. When the existence of an insoluble problem which emanates from the social environment is confirmed.

When considering the concept of polygamy in Islam, one has to bear in mind the historic context which brought this about : Islam sometimes was spread by the sword and this led to widows. To safeguard against that obvious social ills that this imbalance would have brought, up to four wives were permitted under conditions of absolute fairness to co-wives.

Polygamy was strongly regressing both among nomads who, the more camels they had the more wives they were likely to marry, and among the educated people, obviously for economic reasons. It is not unusual to see a man married to two wives in the towns but three or four co-wives are rarity. Economic consideration must thus dictate the number of wives a man must marry. Paradoxical though it sounds polygamy is practised by the poor section of the urban population. At times a poor man marries a second wife in the middle of a family crisis in order to force his previous wife to her senses. This naive solution is sometimes beneficial temporarily, for the first wife may be unwilling to press the matter as far as divorce.

It will not be wrong to say that the whole practice is going into disrepute and public opinion frowns upon a man who takes a second wife unless he has good reason to do so; for instance if his first wife remains barren.

Nevertheless, Somali Women resent polygamy so much that any man who decides to take more than one wife soon risks a life of intrigue born out of jealousy that there is very little likelihood for him of pursuing a happy home life.

To protect the morale of the first wife in the event of permitting the husband to take a second wife, after the conditions set in Article 13 are all met and fully satisfied, she has the option to get a divorce or retain a polygamous marriage.

DIVORCE

Broken-homes remained a source of some chronic social evils in the society for sometimes. Judges gave serious warnings in their annual statistical reports but no meaningful efforts were ever made during the pre-revolutionary era to tackle this crucial social problem which jeopardized not only the tranquillity and the well-being of urban life today, but which

MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES FOR 1970 - 1974

REGION	MARRIAGES				DIVORCES				RATE OF DIVORCES			PROGRESS	
	1970	1972	1974	1970	1972	1974	1970	1972	1970	1972	1974	1970 - 1974	
Benadir	6,204	7,359	11,923	3,995	5,496	4,767	63%	48%	63%	48%	31%	—	32%
Bari	42	97	129	114	170	145	271%	175%	271%	175%	112%	—	159%
Hiran	327	212	286	202	190	332	62%	89%	62%	89%	116%	+	54%
Lower Jubba	536	869	1,240	473	451	616	88%	49%	88%	49%	50%	—	38%
Northeast	—	90	88	14	310	248	1,400%	343%	1,400%	343%	281%	—	1,119%
Northwest	82	—	285	468	313	469	571%	31,300%	571%	31,300%	164%	—	407%
Mudugh	60	154	233	233	171	238	388%	111%	388%	111%	102%	—	286%
Upper Juba	413	579	1,018	389	503	585	89%	87%	89%	87%	57%	—	32%
Total	8,664	9,360	15,202	5,888	5,594	7,400	70%	60%	70%	60%	35%	—	35%

The extreme right three columns of the statistical table, show how much percent, the rate of divorce was reduced over the period under study. That is if the Revolution inherited a situation where 70 marriages were broken in every 100 in 1970 in Somalia, only 35 marriages were broken in 1974 — thus the rate of broken-homes was reduced from 70 to 35. The minus sign, which means a decrease of divorce rate, indicates regions where progress has been achieved through orientation and conciliation. Only in Hiran, which has plus sign, meaning an increase in divorce rate, was the situation deteriorated. It is to be noted that for convenience of comparing figures, the old eight administrative territorial divisions were kept. The 1974 figures of the new six regions were incorporated back into the administrative areas they belonged to in the years 1970 and 1972.

also ruined tomorrow's talented young leaders. And then delinquents. As figures speak for themselves, a comparison of marriages and divorces in the years 1970-72-74 indicated that the total rate of divorce has decreased from 70 % to 35 % — a reduction of 35 % rate in Somalia.

The situation is alarming, indeed very horrifying, in Northwest, Northeast, Mudug, Hiran and Bari areas. It must be noted that men do not strictly adhere to recording marriages while they hardly fail to record divorces in an attempt to disclaim before the Law, all future responsibility concerning maintenance of the divorced spouse. Perhaps that explains why there were no marriages recorded in Northeast and Northwest in the year 1970 and 1972 respectively. Since not all marriages are recorded with Courts, it may be true to argue that the real rate is not alarming as figures show. But it is also true that divorce is a serious problem in this society.

This improvement of a 35 % reduction was achieved through the revolutionary efforts of the judges who did their best to save as many homes as they could in order to reduce the ill-effects of this social menace — broken marriages.

The Shariat Law stipulates that the contract of marriage may be dissolved :

- a) by the husband at his will and without the intervention of the Court;
- b) by mutual consent of the couple, without the Court's Intervention; and
- c) by a judicial decision at the suit of husband or wife.

In this revolutionary era the last practice has gained ground and men are discouraged to divorce their wives out of Court.

The new Law adopts option «C». Article 36 (para 1) reads: «A man can divorce his wife only when the competent Court permits him to do so.» Under para two of this article it is stated that the Court can allow the dissolution of the marriage only after an arbitration committee, set by the same Court, fails to reconcile the couple.

The wife is entitled to apply and to obtain a divorce :

- a) If the husband suffers from chronic disease which

- she did not know at the time of marriage.
- b) If he stays away from home for more than four consecutive years with no justification.
 - c) If he takes the habit of denying her maintenance expenses which he can afford.
 - d) If none of them is able to maintain the family.
 - e) If the Court proves that their differences are irreconcilable.
 - f) If he is proven to be permanently sterile.
 - g) If he has served, and continues to serve, more than four years of imprisonment.
 - h) If the man is permitted to take a second wife.
- page . . .)

In order to tackle the divorce problem, the law is so flexible on religious provisions that resumption of marriage could shariatically take place twice, if the couple decide, within three months (or within the pregnancy period in the case of pregnant divorcee) to revive their partnership.

CHILD CARE

Perhaps not so much concern is shown to the plight of the family if it were not for the off-spring. All are concerned with the up-bringing of the children. Both Islam and socialism attach great importance to the welfare of the children. In highly advanced socialist societies, mother's child care is considered to be a social duty not a private matter. Despite this no where in the world the mother can it be said that she is fully compensated for her suffering in bearing and nursing of the child. However, countries decree facilities such as leave with pay during the last stage of pregnancy and during the first several weeks immediately after delivery. Somalia's protective labour law provides 16 weeks of paid leave for the mother. This is the beginning of recognizing women's domestic work as a social duty.

In the unfortunate cases where marriage is broken, family property is equally shared between spouses, just as much as is the initial expenses while establishing the family according to the new Law.

Article 64 (para I) entrusts the mother with the child-care till the age of 10 for boys and of 15 for girls. Under certain conditions, however, childhood age of both sexes could be extended by the Judge to 18 years. The maintenance is to be shared between the parents. Exception is established where one of them does not afford to do so.

INHERITANCE

As F. Engels writes in his book: «The Origin of the Family, private Property & State» inheritance has been a controversial issue. Socialists believe that male's discontent over inheritance was the cause of the struggle which ended in substituting of the matrilean with partilean system, from which the family evolves in its present form. Under Islam the maintenance of a woman — no matter what age — is the duty of her closest relative, whereas male may not enjoy the same privilege after adolescence. Because he is bound to maintain her, man was given the right to be more equal than her in inheritance. This privilege of hers is lost with the changing historical and economic development of mankind, but man did not lose his privilege — being more equal in matters of inheritance.

This is one of the areas where the new law is most radical. Article, 158 states: **«In the implementation of the principles of the First and the Second Charters of the Revolution, men and women are entitled to equal shares of inheritance.»**

Article 161 also removes a discriminatory practice which invited distant relatives to inheritance in cases where the deceased parents (or one of them) had left female children behind. The law has achieved complete equilibrium in this field. Limiting the number of people entitled to inheritance to descendants, ancestors, brothers and sisters; Article 159 entitles the inheritance of the deceased couple to their children and grandchildren, their fathers and mothers, their grandfathers and grandmothers, and their brother and sisters.

All in all, the Revolutionary Government of the Somali Democratic Republic has embarked on the road to women's

emancipation with a strong determination. The measures (among them this law) taken by Somalia were considered by the world progressive forces as the implementation of the United Nation's deliberation on the subject. One must not be surprised to note that this was the ground on which the Somali socialist revolution has fought, and won, the most fierce battle against the forces of reaction and oppressions since its birth five and half years ago.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

In ancient times as in almost all African countries, Somali women were confined to carrying out the daily household chores such as cooking and caring for children and the training they were given was mainly manual such as weaving, sewing and cattle raising. While Islam and the knowledge of the Quran were widespread in Somalia, female sheikhs were a rarity. This is because women were traditionally considered to be inferior to men.

This backward social structure was carried into the colonial period and apart from the fact that women became a little more urbanized; girls were never on the same footing as boys in the field of education. Likewise after independence they were ignored. There was a wide gap in the proportion of the enrollment figures between boys and girls. The percentage of girls' enrollment scarcely exceeded 20% at the Elementary and Intermediate levels and at the Secondary level the figure never went beyond 5%.

The Socialist Revolution heralded a new period for Somali women in education. Logically if all the productive forces have to be employed towards a full-scale development, the female proportion which is more than half of the Somali population had to be educated with this end in view. Women could not contribute to the economic development of the country if they stay at home. They could not afford to be parasites. They had to be given the opportunity to work and thereby be involved in the task of nation-building.

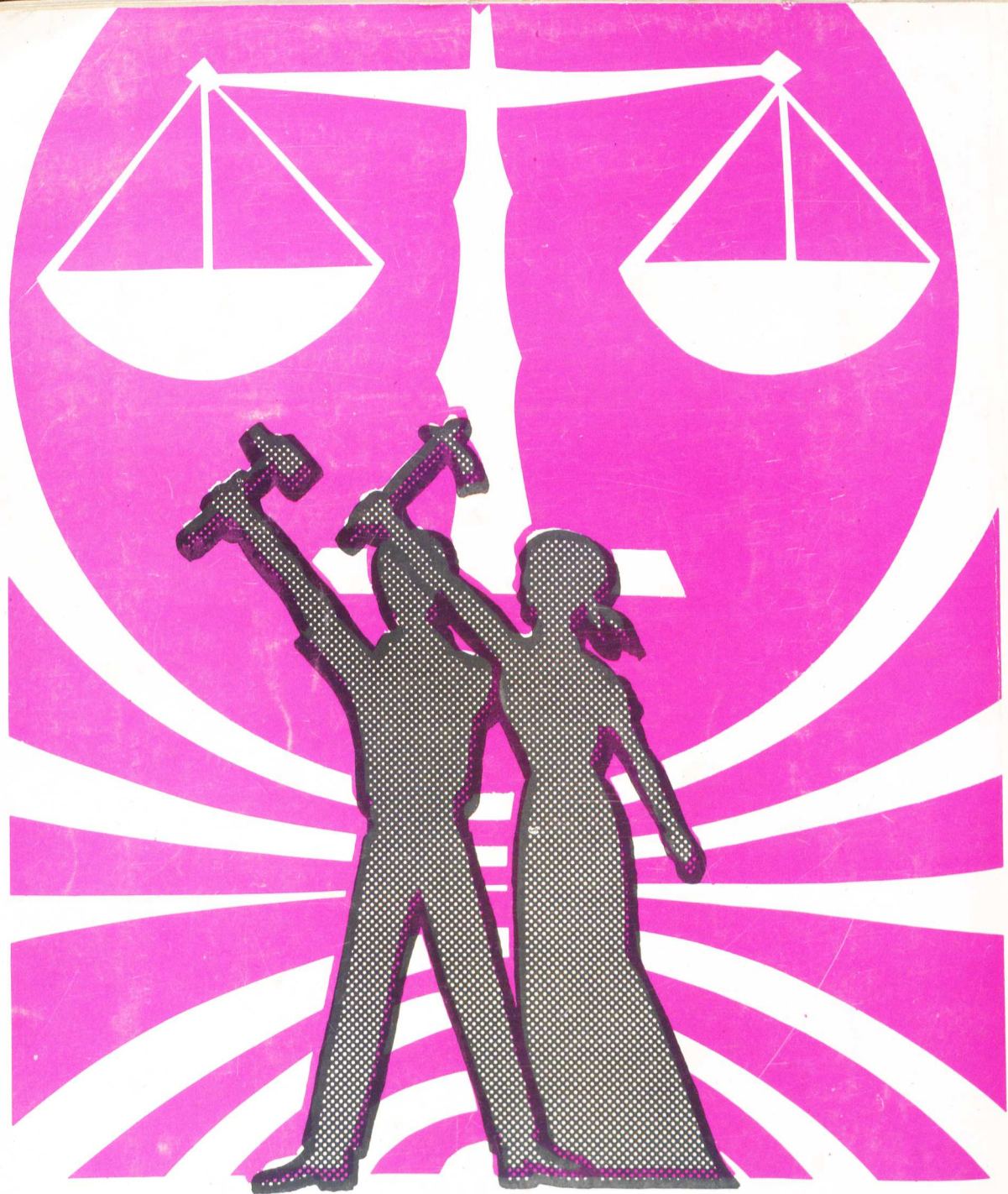
At a Seminar for women held in September 3, 1972 the President of the Supreme Revolutionary Council stressed that

The educational curriculum has been revised to reflect our new goals and objectives. The most important question — the writing of the Somali language — was resolved in October 1972.

There is no doubt that Somali women have always shown their readiness to cooperate with men in fulfilling their duties in accordance with our socialised policies that are aimed at benefitting the nation as a whole which will consequently benefit themselves as well.

Today, Revolutionary Somalia is ever on the move and and more and more schools are being built to accommodate the increasing number of women that are aspiring to a better education. And to release women workers for more productive work, more kindergartens and nurseries are mushrooming in all the regions and districts.

Domestic Science Schools are, in addition, on the increase. This will enable mothers to get basic training which would be of immense value to the building of a good sound home, the nucleus of new socialist society. To construct a society based on justice and equality of opportunity necessitates that women should be given the chance to fully play their role.



Somali Dem. Republic

Mogadisho

printed by the STATE PRINTING AGENCY