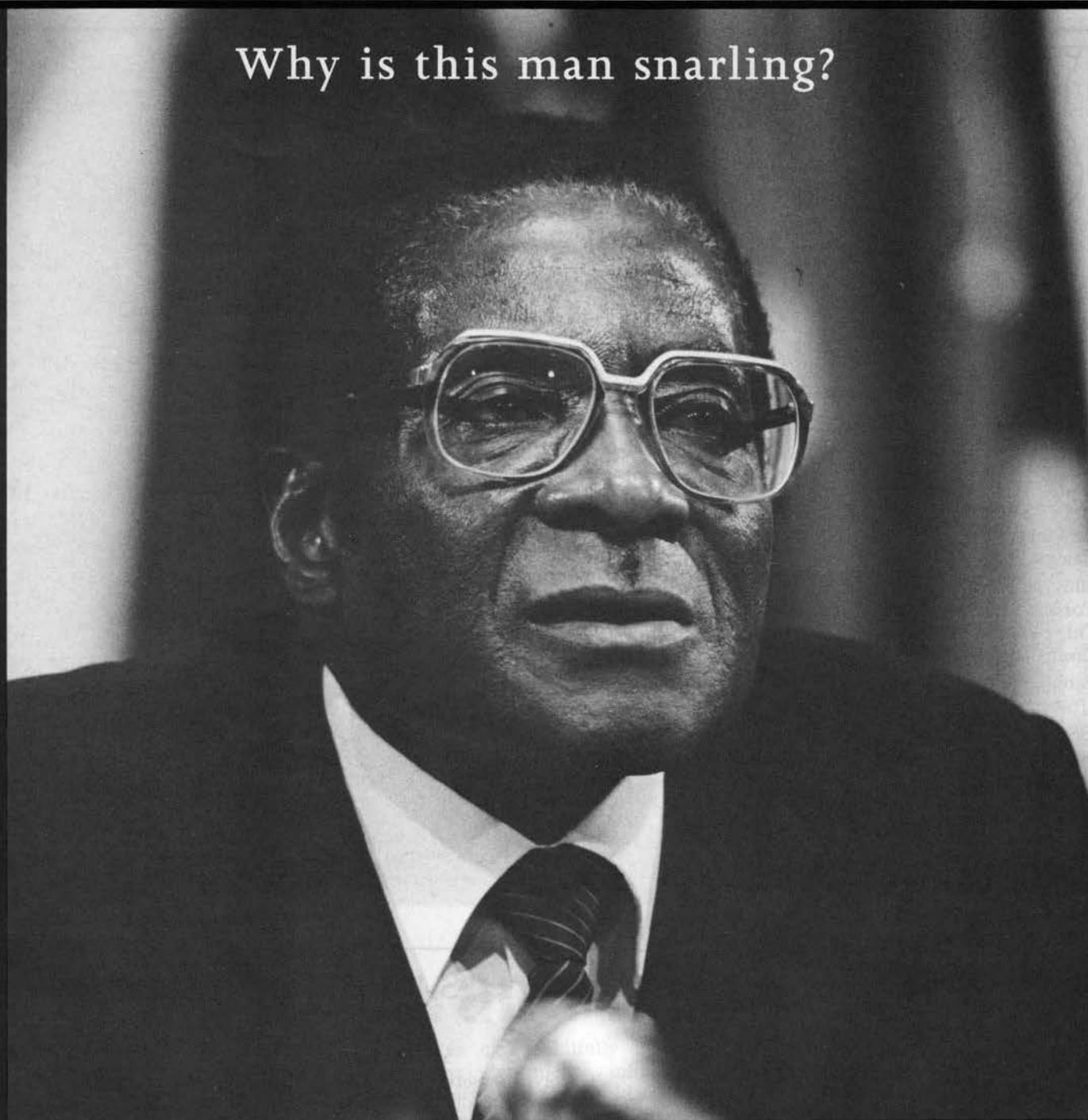


# **Southern Africa** **REPORT**

Vol. 11 No. 4

July 1996

Why is this man snarling?



**Robert Mugabe**

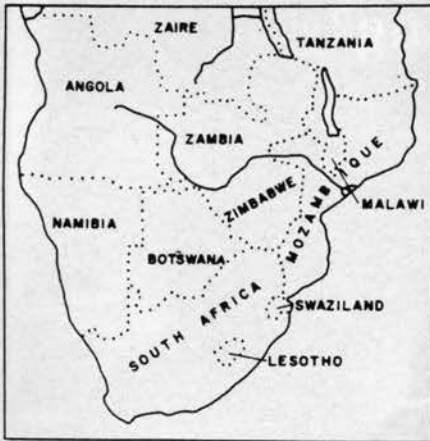
price \$ 4.50

**and the Souring of Zimbabwe**

# Southern Africa REPORT

July 1996

Vol. 11 No. 4



## Southern Africa REPORT

is produced quarterly by a collective of TCLSAC, the Toronto Committee for Links between Southern Africa & Canada

603-1/2 Parliament St  
Toronto, Ontario M4X 1P9  
Tel. (416) 967-5562  
Email [tclsac@web.net](mailto:tclsac@web.net)

Submissions, suggestions and help in production are welcome and invited  
ISSN 0820-5582

Member: Canadian Magazine  
Publishers Association

Indexed in: Canadian Index;  
Canadian Business & Current Affairs  
All rights reversed

## Subscriptions

Southern Africa Report subscription & TCLSAC membership rates:

### SUBSCRIPTION:

Individual (1 year) . . . . \$18.00  
Institution (1 year) . . . . \$40.00

### MEMBERSHIP: (includes subscription)

Regular . . . . . \$35.00  
Unemployed  
Student . . . . . \$18.00  
Senior  
Sustainer . . . . . over \$100.00  
Overseas add \$10.00

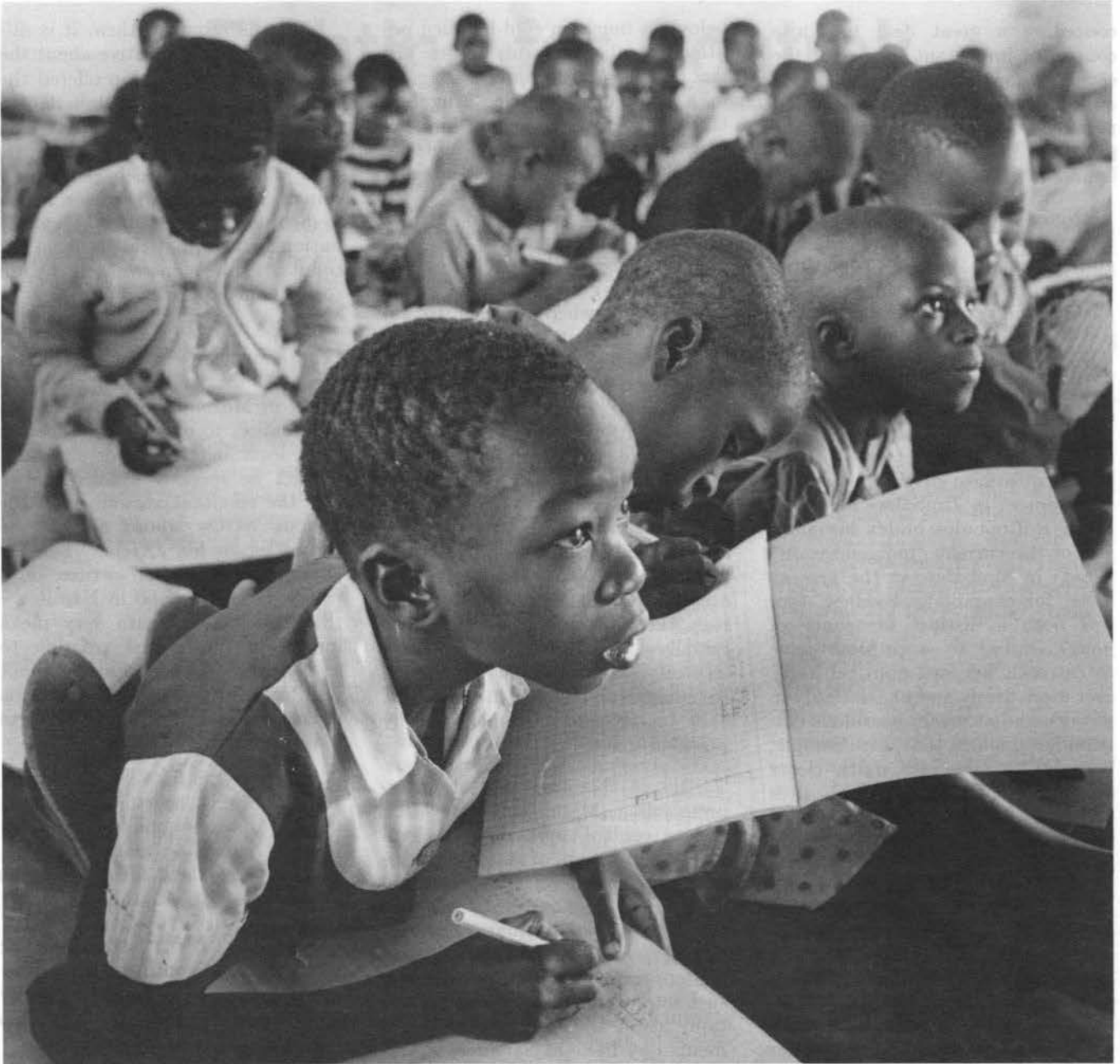
## Contents

Editorial:	
Lean and Mean . . . . .	1
Fighting for Control:	
The Indigenization Debate in Zimbabwe . . . . .	3
ESAP's Fables II . . . . .	8
Gay Bashing in Zimbabwe:	
I - Mugabe's Unholy War . . . . .	13
II - Outing the Gay Debate . . . . .	14
Who Governs? NGOs in Rural Mozambique . . . . .	17
Liberalizing AIDS in Africa:	
The World Bank Role . . . . .	21
Confronting the ANC's Thatcherism . . . . .	25
Namibia's Wall of Silence . . . . .	30

## SAR Collective

Margie Adam, Stephen Allen,  
Carolyn Bassett, Lois Browne, Marlea Clarke, David Cooke,  
Kourosh Farrokhzad, David Galbraith, David Hartman, Lisa Horrocks,  
David Pottie, John S. Saul, Yasmine Shamsie, Marit Stiles,  
Lauren Swenarchuk, Joe Vise, Jonathan Vise, Mary Vise

Cover design by Art Work    Cover photo by Paul Weinberg - Afrapix/Impact Visuals



Caleb Kenna - Impact Visuals

*Zimbabwe - the next generation*

## Lean and Mean

In the pantheon of heroes of the decades-long, region-wide war for southern African liberation, Robert Mugabe has always seemed the leader least easy to like or to admire. Of course, even his critics are forced to admit that he had

played his cards skilfully in the sharp pre-independence infighting that characterized the world of the Zimbabwean liberation movements. At the same time, he and his colleagues had been equally skilful in finessing ZANU-PF's political

victory out from under the noses of the British, the South Africans and the settlers during the tense transition period. Moreover, in the aftermath of that victory, Mugabe earned an even greater reputation for statesmanship, "realistically"



conceding a great deal to white control of important sectors of the economy for example, while never quite acting on his own stated preference to institutionalize the narrowly defined one-party state he apparently had in mind.

Nonetheless, from very early on it was also evident that a vast gulf separated Mugabe's sometimes highly vocal leftist rhetoric – an apparent residue of the heady ideological wars of liberation struggle days – from ZANU-PF's actual practice, as a party and as the vehicle of a new African elite, of *enrichissez-vous*, and the devil take the hindmost. (This latter is the reading of the substance of the nationalist achievement in Zimbabwe on which Brian Raftopoulos builds his analysis of the current "indigenization" debate in Zimbabwe in the present issue, for example). Evident, too, was both a distinct arrogance of power (linked to a ruthless drive to entrench his own political party ever more firmly and unassailably in power), and a certain querulous cultural nationalism that, for example, brought Mugabe into much closer sympathy, during the 1980s, with South Africa's racially-driven Pan-Africanist Congress than with the ANC.

Now, as much more of the sheen of liberation has worn away from the Zimbabwean experience and the cruel light of globalization and structural adjustment, of "guided democracy" and popular demobilization, plays across the land, the meaner side of Mugabe's character stands even more cruelly revealed. What may have looked momentarily like statesmanship was often, one now suspects, little more than low cunning, and the cruelty that launched the bloody Fifth Brigade assault on Matabeleland in the 1980s has come to seem to many observers the truer measure of the man. Case in point: the viciousness of his recent attack on gays in Zimbabwe, an attack premised, as Iden Wetherell argues

below, as much on cold-blooded political calculation – this despite the fact that, as Marc Epprecht suggests in a companion article, Mugabe's tactic may yet backfire on him politically (internationally if not nationally) – as on conviction (however bizarre and spiteful).

Small wonder, as well, that Mugabe has recently had so little trouble in upping the stakes of racial name-calling when, pushed to advance the interests of a newly emergent black entrepreneurial class, it has seemed politically opportune to do so. Of course, as Raftopoulos notes, this too could be a dangerous and contradictory political gambit for Mugabe to adopt, since the extent to which a Zimbabwean state now firmly in the thrall of the World Bank and the global system can advance such local interests is very much in doubt. It is rather easy, therefore, to dismiss Mugabe's racially-charged rhetoric – replacing so easily his previous invocations of socialism and "Marxism-Leninism" – as merely one more ploy to buy political space.

But is this too sour an interpretation? Might this attack on "white control" not, instead, represent some sign of a populist revival in Zimbabwe, the projection of a renewed attempt to advance the interests of ordinary Zimbabweans against those of their historical oppressors? Unfortunately, any such interpretation is difficult to sustain, given the manner (as documented by Richard Saunders in this issue) in which the ZANU government has also allowed its embrace of structural adjustment to drive many more Zimbabweans closer to the wall of poverty. In the process, and without much apology from the political powers-that-be, an ever leaner state has been stripped of many of the functions – in the spheres of popular education and health services, in particular – that once marked the most positive achievements of Zimbabwe's post-colonial period.

For the moment, then, it is difficult to feel very positive about the quality of the leadership offered the Zimbabwean people by Robert Mugabe, or indeed, more broadly, by his party, ZANU-PF. Rather, a further, quite mean-spirited debasing of the coinage of political discussion seems to be his principle current contribution to the political scene in his country. Time alone will tell the full costs of this approach.

\* \* \*

Lean and mean? Elsewhere in this issue, Alexander Costy writes of a state, in Mozambique, so lean that it threatens to disappear altogether – at least in the important rural district he recently studied. And into the resultant vacuum rush the various NGOs whose activity he chronicles in his article. For her part, Lauren Dobell writes of a ruling party – Swapo in Namibia – that threatens to turn very mean indeed in its fevered reaction to a book that reveals more about its abuses of power as a liberation movement in exile than it cares to have known.

Add to this, for South Africa, Patrick Bond's heartfelt reflections on the contradictions that continue to stalk efforts to craft a progressive post-apartheid future. Colleen O'Manique targets the disturbing trend towards "neo-liberalization" of responses to the AIDS epidemic in Africa, a continent-wide phenomenon that we hope to specify further with case-studies of AIDS in southern Africa in future issues.

Not that *SAR* itself is any leaner than usual, we hasten to add (even if we do continue to be rather too thin on financial resources!) – you're getting your customary 36 pages. As for "mean": no, we're trying to keep our equanimity, and even something of our sense of humour, in a global situation that, North and South, is none too encouraging. We look forward to our twelfth year of publication after a brief summer hiatus. See you then.



# Fighting for Control: The Indigenization Debate in Zimbabwe

BY BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS

*Brian Raftopoulos is Acting Director, Institute of Development Studies, University of Zimbabwe*

The "indigenization debate" has been a major theme of political discourse in Zimbabwe for some time. But more recently, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has increased his rhetorical attacks on multinationals and white business. Mugabe's accusations that white and foreign capital have been blocking black advancement in the economy certainly rings true but as always, his threats have been short on substance.

In 1995, the debate took a new turn as Strive Masiyiwa, a Zimbabwean businessman, set up a new company, ECONET, to establish a cellular telephone system in conjunction with a US company. Masiyiwa ran up against an obstacle: in response to the formation of this company the Post and Telecommunication Corporation (PTC) refused to grant ECONET a licence to operate.

Masiyiwa took the case to the Supreme Court which ruled that the establishment of a cellular network was a constitutional right relating to freedom of expression and that the PTC monopoly was not justifiable in a democratic society. In response, the President issued the Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures Cellular Telecommunications Services) Regulations of 1996, re-establishing the PTC monopoly over the provision of cellular telephone services. The regulations require that other parties wishing to enter this field acquire clearance from a ministerial technical committee established to vet applications. In May this year

Masiyiwa submitted papers to the Supreme Court seeking to declare the Presidential Powers unconstitutional.

In this battle with the state Strive Masiyiwa has not received any support from the indigenization lobbies which have, until now, been at the forefront of debate and discussion around this issue. It would seem that the lobby groups are more concerned with not jeopardizing their close relations with the state. The state itself is clearly not prepared to tolerate such attempts to develop autonomous power bases in the private sector. Another argument that has been raised is that Masiyiwa is a front for white multinational business. If the state had a clear and principled policy on international finance – and if certain high-ranking members of ZANU PF weren't, themselves, acting as a front for white capital – this argument would have more force. Even the indigenization lobbies are not on the whole averse to foreign capital except in so far as they seek greater resources and legislative support in their relations with the latter.

The ECONET episode is important not only because it indicates a certain trend in the assertiveness of the African Business elite. Masiyiwa's use of the judiciary to challenge the state is reflective of a broader trend among independent, ex-ZANU PF politicians and opposition parties to use the courts to challenge unfair election procedures on the part of the ruling party. These high profile individual judicial challenges demonstrate the most viable route at present for elite challenges to ZANU PF dominance. However this emphasis on legal battles also

demonstrates the distance between such elite resistance, and the inability of opposition parties to construct a broader oppositional alternative. In the midst of all this judicial activity, the absence of the lobby groups would appear to be indicative of the state of the indigenization debate in Zimbabwe today. This debate has reached a crisis point, characterized by conflicting groups, and ruled over by a state that is unclear about what its indigenization strategy should consist of. How did Zimbabwe get to such a point? Indeed, what is the "indigenization debate" and who are these "lobby groups," anyway?

## The 1980s

During the formative years of Nationalist politics in Southern Rhodesia, in the 1950s, a central concern of the emerging nationalist intellectual elite was its desire for upward mobility. Through its educational achievements, professional aspirations, and social and cultural practices a significant number of this elite sought to establish themselves, and to be seen as, an emergent middle class, even as they sought, and succeeded in presenting themselves as a nationalist leadership.

Unfortunately for this nascent elite the structures, ideology and policies of settler colonialism seriously constrained their ambitions. However the aspirations remained, even during the years of the liberation struggle when the recalcitrance of settler colonialism, the imperatives of guerrilla warfare and the determining influences of geopolitical alliances, introduced the largely rhetorical adherence to a socialist trajectory. As Mugabe admitted in 1991:

Our former parties, ZANU-PF and P.F. ZAPU were established and developed in an environment which, on the one hand, was national and on the other, was international. But as the parties established themselves externally and began relating to socialist countries, the Soviet Union and China . . . they not only derived many thousands of tons of weapons for the national struggle but their political ideology as well [*Financial Gazette*: 28 March, 1991].

The strong, organic development of a socialist strategy during the liberation struggle always remained weak, even during those brief heroic attempts at a leftist turn by groups such as ZIPA, who in the mid-70s attempted to transcend the more limited agenda of the old guard nationalist leadership. The rise of an African middle class remained a central element of the liberation agenda, even though its political discourse was often cloaked in more appealing populist rhetoric. The seeds of an indigenization project, which saw the emergence of an African bourgeoisie, was therefore an important, though contested, part of nationalist ideology.

With Independence in 1980, an alliance of nationalist parties fulminating with leftist discourse, but for the most part intent on consolidating a new state and party elite, took power. During the first eight years of independence the state embarked on a combination of welfarist programmes for the African majority and consolidation of state elite through the use of state resources. During this period, the language of indigenous capital accumulation was repressed and officially such an agenda was looked at disdainfully. The popular legacy of the liberation war and the ideology of developmentalism through welfarist policies, combined with elite ethnic alliances, provided a cementing ideology for a nation in the making. Nevertheless, this was a period of a broadly popular government in which the claims of an indigenous accumulation project

were marginalized or undertaken surreptitiously in both the state and in the white-controlled private sector.

There were several reasons for the marginalization of this debate. First, the policy of Reconciliation introduced in 1980 sought a peaceful co-existence with white capital which continued to dominate the private sector. The policy of "Growth with Equity" introduced in 1981 sought to achieve high rates of economic growth, increased incomes and a restructuring of the economy to promote rural development. The policy also included a rapid increase of social services for the majority. The role of the black entrepreneurial class in the project was, for the most part, absent. Second, the governing elite was opposed to the emergence of an African business class, autonomous of the state. They feared that such a class would be less reliant on the politics of patronage and would therefore be less easy to control. Third, the developmentalist policies and populist rhetoric of the 1980s provided a cover beneath which the state elite indulged its own enrichment. Through this covert process the leadership of the ruling party purchased commercial farms, and entered into various other commercial ventures. The proliferation of parastatals in the 1980's such as the Zimbabwe Development Corporation (ZIDCO), the Zimbabwe State Trading Corporation, the Mineral Marketing Corporation and many others, provided a further means to enlarge the basis of the state dependent petty-bourgeoisie, and expand the net of political patronage. Apart from such interventions, there was also the more crude looting of state assets through corrupt practices. For instance, the 1988 Willowgate Scandal in which ministers were allowed to purchase cars at reduced prices from a state-owned assembly plant, was then turned into an accumulation opportunity, as these ministers resold the vehicles at substantially higher prices.

But by the late 1980s several factors induced the indigenization debate to emerge with greater force. First, the clear limitations of the 1980s accumulation model were placing pressures on the state to redirect its economic policies. An increasing budget deficit, limited foreign investment, and growing unemployment were some of the major factors which increased internal business forces' criticism of the state and external pressure from international financial institutions. This resulted in the 1990 introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme [ESAP]. The new legitimacy which this programme provided for capital accumulation meant that frustrated aspirations of the emerging African elite could no longer be ideologically repressed. The way was opened for the forces of indigenous accumulation to press their demands with greater openness and legitimacy.

Second, demands for greater African participation in ownership of the economy were made against a background of continuing racial inequalities in the post-colonial economy. For example, by 1991, 50% of the population received less than 15% of total annual incomes and about 15% of total consumption, while the richest three percent of the population received 30% of total incomes and were responsible for 30% of total consumption. [*World Bank, Poverty in Zimbabwe: Current Knowledge and Issues for the Future, 1995.*]

Finally, the retreat from socialist rhetoric linked to the broader international consequences of the 1989 debacle in Eastern Europe left the ruling party without a mobilizing ideology. The ideology of indigenization combined a certain continuity with nationalist demands of the past, with renewed attempts to capture and control the more recent demands of an aggressive and expanded African elite for a greater share of the post-colonial promise. For the ruling party, this

was also a political imperative as the emergence in the late 1980s of opposition parties such as the Zimbabwe Unity Movement and the Forum Party had demonstrated the potential for political opposition from disconcerted sections of the African middle class.

## Indigenous business lobbies emerge

Black business persons seized the opportunity to ensure that their interests were not marginalized under ESAP. In 1990, the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC) was formed and, with the support of some state bureaucrats and politicians, began to lobby the state vigorously. In general, the IBDC sought the decisive support of the state to promote black entrepreneurs through state-led policy reforms and the allocation of state resources to blacks on preferential

terms. Their demands included: the deregulation of laws and procedures hindering black enterprises; directives to financial institutions to finance black businesses; access to finance at well below market interest rates; preferential allocation of government contracts and markets to blacks; land redistribution designed to build a strong black commercial class in the agrarian sector; and anti-trust legislation to control the monopoly position of white capital.

To date, the IBDC has been relatively effective in using what Sam Moyo described as the 'entryst' approach to lobbying, involving close contact with top level state and party officials, members of parliament and business executives in the private sector. Indeed, the IBDC's lobbying interventions have been, to a significant extent, the cata-

lyst which brought indigenization to the forefront of Zimbabwean political debate.

Lobbying for political position from IBDC structures has become a feature of IBDC politics. In the 1995 cabinet shuffle, two IBDC members were appointed to Deputy Ministerial positions. Certainly, this is a logical step for an organization heavily reliant on state intervention for furthering its programmes. However, in focusing its efforts on the state, the IBDC has neglected its own democratic structures. It has had problems providing a leadership succession structure, with the IBDC constitution providing a complex sequence of electoral procedures. While annual elections at the Regional and General Assemblies have the objective of expanding the democratic procedures, leadership struggles have instead intensified. In addition the actual member-



Ernst Schade - Impact Visuals



ship base of the IBDC is not clear. Attempts to obtain a list of members and their actual economic activities has proved fruitless.

As a result of these conflicts, there has been a split within the IBDC: one faction led by Ben Muccheche, a leading figure in the transport sector, and another by Chemist Siziba, a former president of the IBDC. At present there is little sign that the rift will be healed, and there are indications that leading politicians have lent their support to different factions within the IBDC. Thus, the IBDC's very existence has become dependent on changing power relations within the ruling party ... a fragile basis for support.

As well, what gains have been made by the IBDC are negligible. Although the IBDC counts several state initiatives - such as the Set-Aside programme in the construction sector which requires that at least 30% of the contract value of all large-scale building contracts be sub-contracted to small- and medium-sized enterprises - among its successes, for indigenous business people these were considered insufficient. For its part, the state has been divided between a formal commitment to indigenization and the need to maintain strict fiscal control over funds disbursed for this programme. Moreover, the state has yet to produce an overall strategy on indigenization. Several general draft reports produced by the Planning Commission and a Committee of Experts of the ruling party, remain programmatic statements and lists of objectives, rather than a concrete plan worked out with the sectors and social partners concerned. The document says more about the weakness of the position of the Planning Commission in the structure of government, than it does about the seriousness of commitment to a broadly discussed programme of indigenization.

There are also signs of a tension in government over indigeniza-

tion policies. In 1994, the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Indigenization of the National Economy, established in April 1991, complained of the: reluctance by government to show its willingness to serve small and medium scale businesses when they are beset with financial problems by invoking the state loans and guarantees act which it has done with big companies when faced with closure.

The absence of an overall policy on indigenization and the lack of transparency of the policies already in place have already resulted in serious abuses. The 1994 Tenant Farmer scandal in which the Minister of Agriculture leased state farms whose leases had expired with white farmers, to select black farmers without transparent guidelines, provided an example of the kind of inconsistent indigenization programme that could unfold in the country.

#### Birds of a feather

The continuing debilitating crisis within the IBDC and apparent stasis in new government initiatives on the indigenous programme led to the formation of a new organization of indigenous business persons in July 1994. The Affirmative Action Group (AAG) has adopted an aggressive lobbying strategy using even more stridently nationalist language than the IBDC. As with the IBDC, the interventions of the AAG resonate with the discourse of the American Black Nationalist Movement. In a statement reminiscent of Malcolm X, the AAG has warned:

*Those who wish to become 'uncle Toms' or the field Negroes or the window-dressed or the 'Mr Nice Guys' ... are using their sense of professionalism to defend the indefensible at the expense of the nation ... be warned ... A.A.G. will expose them ...*

Once again beyond the bravado of public statements the membership base of this organization re-

mains unclear. Indeed, not only is the AAG programme similar to that of the IBDC but they appear to be attempting to forge an even closer alliance with the ruling party.

In January 1995, yet another indigenous lobbying group was organized in order to inject new life and direction into the antagonization debate. The National Reconstruction and Development Board (NRDB), made up of both IBDC and AAG members, aimed to bring together technocrats and astute business people "of all races" to develop a policy framework for black economic empowerment. It was intended that this Board should be independent and, 'not a wing of particular pressure groups.'

A major issue for the group was the procedure for selling government assets. The sale of government shares in Delta Corporation to South African Breweries and the sale of Astra Corporation shares in National Foods to AM Zimbabwe (formerly Anglo American Corporation), had raised serious questions about government commitment to indigenization. The NRDB objected that:

*The blacks lack information on what is happening with regards to disposal of government assets. The whole process is not transparent, and the indigenous persons interested in acquiring government assets do not know how to go about it, because of lack of information. The Board should demand a public modus operandi on sale of government assets. [Minutes of the Third Meeting of the NRDB; March 31, 1995.]*

The NRDB's attempt to unify various indigenization lobbies did not succeed as the different groups continued to both pursue their different political patrons in the ruling party leadership and maintained different emphases in their lobbying strategies. While both the IBDC and the AAG have clamoured for business deregulation and state sub-

sides, the AAG has placed greater emphasis on the control and redistribution of white-owned wealth.

### Other Voices: The World Bank and labour

Aside from these lobby groups, the indigenization debate has drawn reactions both internally and externally. The World Bank has responded to the current indigenization initiatives of the state with a call for restraint on government intervention. In the case of land reallocation, the Bank proposes a progressive land tax. With regard to industrial and financial wealth the Bank warns,

*it is important that changes to assets ownership are based on efficiency criteria, but there are no mechanisms built into the proposals so far put forward that would ensure that new owners of such assets would be efficient managers – an issue which generally the market is much better at revealing than any administrative mechanism. There is therefore a risk that such asset reallocation will lead to individuals with privileged access to decision makers being favoured ... [World Bank, *The Public Sector and Poverty Reduction Options in Zimbabwe*; 1995.]*

The World Bank has introduced a Z\$700-million loan scheme for small businesses which has been critically received by the indigenization lobbies. These lobbies feel that the facility could benefit established white-owned businesses, unless specific measures are introduced to ensure that black-owned companies and the informal sector are given priority. The Indigenization groups are also opposed to funds being made available through commercial banks, which they argue will continue to support white control of the economy. In the words of the President of the AAG:

*These financial institutions and their staff are incapable of dealing with the informal sector ... if I had a choice I would personally prefer*

*that the service be provided by the Post Office Savings Bank which understands small money which is what people in the informal sector need.*

The World Bank has therefore challenged virtually all the key assumptions and demands of the indigenization lobby, favouring instead market-determined 'race neutral' schemes that accept the racial distribution of resources as a basis for neo-liberal 'reform.'

Expectedly, the rhetoric and agenda of the lobby groups has also drawn the ire of certain white business commentators. On the one hand, white business takes the perspective which leaves indigenization largely at the discretion of the private sector and totally subordinate to market driven growth. State interventions into the process are considered largely disruptive of the white business view of 'racial harmony' which is centrally concerned with the least possible disruption to white privilege in the Zimbabwean economy. On the other hand, there is the argument that the lack of progress in indigenizing the economy lies in cultural differences between the races based on a dualist model of the economy. Both of these perspectives totally ignore the institutional and structural interventions of the settler state which severely proscribed the ability of blacks to privately accumulate fixed assets.

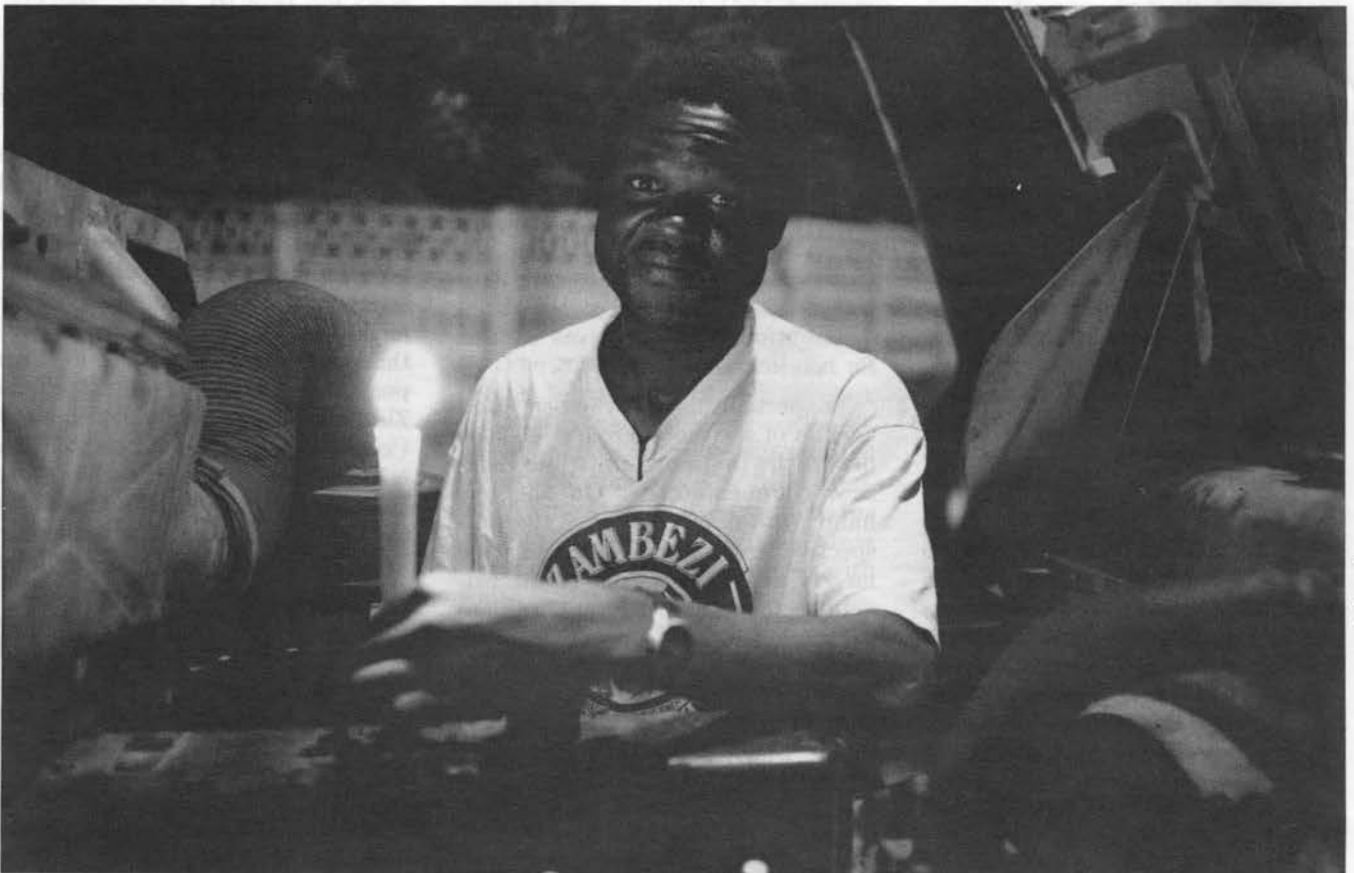
For its part, the labour movement while broadly supporting the policy of indigenization, has criticised the narrow conception of the programme being espoused by the indigenization lobbies. As the movement has watched its members being marginalised and further impoverished by ESAP it has called for a broader process of black empowerment which reaches beyond the accumulative agendas of the black elite.

In an attempt to move the debate on indigenization into a more general discussion of alternative development strategies, the Zimbabwe

Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), in its publication *Beyond ESAP (1996)* has called for a corporate strategy between labour, the state and capital. Through such a strategy the labour movement hopes to develop what it refers to as a "truly national compromise" in which "all interest groups and stakeholders participate in policy formulation, decision making and implementation." In order to develop this corporate setting the ZCTU has proposed the establishment of the Zimbabwe Economic Development Council (ZEDC) developed on the NEDLAC model in South Africa. However, while this is a refreshing intervention on the part of labour, at this stage it is highly unlikely that the labour movement has the lobbying strength on its own to change the current direction of the indigenization debate.

### Indigenization: ideology of transformation?

Finally, there is no doubt that a call for more African control of the economy in Zimbabwe is a justified intervention which has mobilized large sections of emergent business groups in the country. Moreover, Mugabe has increased his attacks on white business and multinationals, accusing them of continually blocking black advancement in the economy. Much of his political rhetoric over the last year has concentrated on this theme, as he seeks to mobilise an increasingly disillusioned constituency. However, at present, the indigenization debate in Zimbabwe has reached a crisis point, divided by conflicting groups, and presided over by a state that is itself unclear about the indigenization strategy it would like to pursue. Furthermore, indigenization as an ideology of transformation remains proscribed by the elitist nature of its programmatic reach. Thus, even if an indigenization strategy was advanced in a more dramatic manner, structural reform of a grossly imbalanced economy seems unlikely in the near future.



Scott Braley - Impact Visuals

Zimbabwean repairing a broken down truck, stuck in the street at night with few tools by candle light - a metaphor?

## ESAP's Fables II

BY RICHARD SAUNDERS

*Richard Saunders is SAR's Zimbabwe correspondent.*

Zimbabwe's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), launched in 1990, was meant to herald a new era of modernised, competitive, export-led industrialisation. But despite a high-performing economy in its first decade of independence, the country now appears firmly lodged in a quagmire of mounting debt and erratic growth in the wake of five years of ESAP-mandated reforms.

In a short time, ESAP's World Bank-inspired reforms has ripped into the existing economic and so-

cial infrastructure, shifting the focus of many mass-oriented development social programs away from redistribution towards management of defined and limited, even declining, public resources. Now, as Zimbabweans await the unveiling of a follow-on, second five-year program, rising popular displeasure with ESAP has brought pressure to bear on the government and its international backers for the re-evaluation of what has proven in practice to be a treacherous model of development.

When ESAP was first introduced, the government claimed it was the only alternative to continued production bottlenecks, stag-

nant local demand and a worsening unemployment problem that threatened to become politically troublesome. Zimbabwean industry was an easy convert, but the country's political leadership was less easily swayed. In the 1980s, Zimbabwe had been a star performer in Africa in the provision of social services and in the reconstruction and development of its public infrastructure. Average life expectancy was on the rise; childhood mortality was down, and other measuring sticks such as the literacy rate and the technical skills capacity were encouraging. Moreover, most of this social growth was financed by government without jeopardizing relative macroeconomic stability.



But from the mid-1980s the ruling party maintained that the future development of the country would depend upon the leading participation of the local private sector and capital inflows from overseas. So it did not come as a shock when the first phases of ESAP were announced, starting with government's budget statement in July 1990. What did come as a surprise was the rapidity with which the program undermined the relative stability of Zimbabwe's social economy.

Zimbabwe's adjustment program contained the usual collection of Bank-inspired reforms – trade and currency de-regulation, devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar, movement towards high real interest rates, the lifting of price controls, chopping of "social spending" and removal of consumer subsidies. All were standard ingredients of "liberalisation," as were the Bank's and IMF's increasing emphasis on reduction of the government deficit, civil service reform and shedding of public enterprises. And finally, there was the string of large loans and credit facilities from the Bank, the IMF and international donors, aimed at supporting the country's balance of payments and government's plans for substantial private sector infrastructural development. At the outset, it was estimated that roughly US\$3 billion over five years would be needed from overseas donors to make the reforms work. Zimbabwe would spend its way into a new free market on borrowed money.

Government and its bankers said the new investment would be focused on modernizing the manufacturing sector which would enable the country to compete in international markets and earn the hard currency needed to pay back ESAP's underpinning foreign loans. An optimistic target of 5% annual growth in GDP was set by the Bank and government. Meanwhile, government fiscal restraint elsewhere, involving reduction in services, divest-

ment of public corporations and layoffs in the government sector, would reduce the state's deficit from the usual 10% to 5% or less. The government admitted this risked higher unemployment and higher consumer prices in "the short term," but Zimbabweans were promised a rising real standard of living, long-term employment expansion and a modern, growing, internationally-competitive economy.

But in a country where local production was highly integrated and often efficient, and where a large state provided a range of quality social services, the reforms represented more peril than promise for most.

### **An experiment gets out of control**

As it happened, neither the market reforms, nor the different measures that were meant to offset their effects on the most vulnerable, went according to plan. At the same time as parts of the Zimbabwean private sector displayed worrying signs of deindustrialization, and the public debt spiralled upwards, the standard of living of most Zimbabweans was also plummeting to levels not seen in 25 years.

The initial economic shock treatment undertaken with ESAP's launch in the early 1990s hit the business sector and ordinary Zimbabweans very hard, and the impact of these measures was greatly exacerbated by the severe drought of the early 1990s. In 1992, after two consecutive poor rainy seasons, the economy contracted by at least 7.5%, with all sectors in Zimbabwe's agriculture-based productive sector affected. At the same time, price control relaxation saw inflation explode and consumer demand shrink, by as much as 30%.

One result was a sharp decline in average real wages. It was the beginning of a trend that would see, by the mid 1990s, average real earnings fall to the lowest levels since the early 1970s. ESAP,

one study concluded, was quickly bringing the Zimbabwean working class to the brink of widespread destitution. In the rural areas, the majority population was often forced to depend on government food aid. By the end of the drought in November 1992, more than half the population of the country was receiving some form of drought relief assistance from government.

However, the return of rains in 1993 did not improve the situation, making it clear that the ESAP reforms themselves were the leading factor in undermining ordinary people's standard of living. Loan agreements emanating from ESAP have stretched the country's foreign and domestic debt to unmanageable proportions. And ESAP's deficit-cutting fetish has led to the state's slashing of real per-capita social spending throughout the 1990s, and the marked undermining of local industry by government's greater – not smaller – role in one part of the private sector, financial markets. Forced to borrow heavily from local markets to finance reforms and service the deficit, government ended up distorting financial flows. Heavy public sector demand crowded-out private sector borrowing, and kept real interest rates punishingly high.

The combined outcome of chaotic fiscal policy and increased competition from imports is the development of a worrying pattern of deindustrialization, amid a pattern of spiralling government deficit and debt.

### **Social cuts and their consequences**

The primary response to the continued government deficit and climbing debt servicing was increased pressure to cut real spending on public services, including the cost of overall government administration itself. In this regard, it soon became clear that the fine attention to technical details which were part of the economic reform process was missing when it came to devising, imple-

menting and reforming programs involving the "social" aspects of adjustment.

Moreover, there was a shift in emphasis in the redesign of the state's social programs, away from a concern with issues of equity and access, towards a system of management driven primarily by the problem of how to administer the supply of services given defined, limited resources. The negative social and economic consequences of this shift were immediately and abundantly clear for ordinary Zimbabweans. Of particular note was the rapid deterioration in the country's acclaimed health and education sectors.

### Health care

Public expenditure on health care declined by 39% in 1994-95. This decrease implied diminished spending on common drugs, extension and preventative health services, specialist facilities and treatment, and other components of quality health care delivery. At the same time, the government's stricter enforcement of a user fees system erected barriers to health care in the way of poorer social groups who were, typically, those most in need of health services.

Worrying developments included a growth in perinatal mortality, accounted for by a variety of factors, including the increasing incidence of unbooked expectant mothers and "babies born before arrival," and decreased access to prenatal consultations, equipment, necessary facilities and, not least of all, drugs. A more widespread, essential problem involved diminishing drug supplies. Between 1988/89 and 1993/94, the real value of the national revolving drug fund, allocated to the agency that supplied approximately 80% of drugs dispensed to public and private health institutions, declined by 67%, resulting in shortages and the growing use of private channels to secure drugs and equipment.

In 1992 doctors and nurses began referring to "ESAP deaths," de-

scribed as deaths caused by the inability of patients to pay for the minimal length of time in the hospital, or for prescription medicine. The Minister of Health, Dr. Timothy Stamps has acknowledged that only one in ten Zimbabweans can afford to pay for their own health care. Yet fees remained in place, largely at the insistence of ESAP policy makers.

Meanwhile, accounts from rural clinics and hospitals have urgently noted the near collapse of health care services under the weight of cutbacks and imposed self-reliance. Professional morale and service delivery within the public health system has wilted. Many doctors, nurses and technicians have been tempted into the higher-paying, better equipped local private sector, or out-of-country altogether.

The inevitable result has been the rapid entrenchment of a two-tier health care system, in which those most in need and least able to pay have been increasingly marginalised from quality services.

### Education

The same contradictions between cost savings and rising social need have emerged to threaten the country's celebrated post-independence advances in primary and secondary education. In the primary sector in particular, real per capita spending and average spending per pupil fell to the lowest levels since independence.

While government's declining investment undermined the quality of education, its imposition of user fees effectively barred easy access to education for hundreds of thousands of students from poorer households. The overall result of fee imposition was a decline by as much as 5% in enrollments by children in urban primary schools, despite a growth in the potential school-going population.

Over time, the government has established a relief system and in

1995, government spent \$53 million helping 265,000 students with tuition and examination fees. But this still fell far short of the actual basic need, and did not begin to address additional heavy school attendance expenses including school levies, materials, uniforms and other costly items. And the economic benefit to government from the imposition of cost-sharing fees? In 1992-93, educational charges raised only \$50 million - or 0.5% of budgeted government expenditure.

### (Anti)-social dimensions of adjustment

To offset any negative impact of ESAP on poorer Zimbabwean households and retrenched public sector workers, government introduced the Social Development Fund (SDF) to assist poor households with school fees, health fees and food money subsidies. Retrenched civil servants were to be assisted with retraining and seed capital for entry into the private sector. But for the most part these new programs were less carefully planned and implemented than other components of ESAP and were to prove largely ineffective in cushioning the impact of reform on ordinary Zimbabweans.

The funds allotted to the SDF fell far short of matching the rate of government cuts in the social sectors of health and education. Spending cuts in the executing government agency hampered implementation of the SDF assistance. It was made the responsibility of potential beneficiaries to apply to the SDF for relief and there was considerable general confusion, even among government officials, as to what criteria qualified an applicant for assistance, and how screening should be carried out. Application paperwork was cumbersome, especially for the less educated who also tended to have less access to information on the programs. Co-ordination among the different relief schemes, which evidently had an overlapping target clientele, was poor.



Margaret Waller/LINK - Impact Visuals

The result was that a small proportion of those who were eligible for assistance were reached with resources that were, in any event, insufficient to offset the impact of government cuts.

Continued reduced overall real spending by government now points to systematic and increasing shortfalls in social infrastructure investments. The one exception in this regard - large real growth in capi-

tal spending (much of it construction) - has been heavily dependent on donor injections of capital, and has raised further questions about how government will manage to meet new recurrent expenditures in a period of public service retrenchments and declining recurrent spending. The seemingly apparent solution - that recurrent expenditure on the social sector could be increased in real terms - runs counter to ESAP's overriding policy

objective, of continued and tightening budget restraint.

### Fallout and fracturing

Promising rapid economic growth, expanding employment opportunities and a hands-off, efficient state, ESAP fell far short of its main macroeconomic targets. In reality, growth slowed and became more erratic, averaging only 1.2% (not the 5% envisaged) over 1991-94, a dis-



appointing performance only partly due to the droughts of 1992 and 1995. In fact, a range of indicators reflect the entrenchment of deeper and systemic problems in the "reformed" economy, including high inflation (which has stubbornly remained above 20%, averaging 28.8% in 1991-94, instead of falling to the projected 10%) and a continued substantial government deficit (which has fluctuated around 10%, averaging 8.8% of GDP in the early 1990s, far above the 5% level anticipated by the World Bank in 1990).

Most Zimbabweans have experienced these changes in terms of employment and falling standards of living. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions estimated that about 55,000 jobs were lost up to 1995 – about double the figure estimated by government. Real incomes for those still in the formal sector dropped sharply during ESAP (and they continue to fall), undermined by persistently high inflation and slow growth in most wage packets. In the burgeoning informal sector of hawkers, small scale and backyard production, cross-border traders, streetkids, prostitutes and others, real incomes probably fell even more sharply. The public sector, too, has suffered unprecedented job losses and falling real salaries. About 22,000 public service employees have been retrenched, alongside large cutbacks in real recurrent expenditure on services. But though the state may be "smaller" in terms of personnel, it is not necessarily more efficient.

Declining conditions of work and uncompetitive pay have chased many better-skilled public servants out of government, feeding a growing popular perception that government's main economic policy is being driven by "foreign experts." Among those who feel most threatened and disenfranchised by the new anti-social planning regime, and who are most critical of it, are trade unions and civic organisations. Public sector associations, in particular,

have complained increasingly that corporate planning within government services is being imposed by the World Bank and IMF, without regard to the views or suggestions of those who actually work in the system.

Foreign consultants and their agencies appear to have direct and largely hidden access to government decision-making processes. Some see evidence of this influence in the formulation and funding of government's latest coping "social" program, the Poverty Alleviation Action Plan, which will depend centrally on the input of several hundred million dollars and other support from the Bank and a collection of other donors. What does seem incontrovertible, is the augmented financial leverage afforded expatriate institutions – governmental, multi-lateral and private – in light of the growing fiscal crisis of the Zimbabwean state.

Moreover, foreign agencies have shown increasing willingness to respond with pressure when government's actions do not meet with their satisfaction. In May 1995, the IMF backed up its demands for further spending cuts by withholding balance of payments support credits. Later, other donors including the Bank were to follow suit. The cruellest irony of ESAP is perhaps that a policy which aimed to halve the government deficit and finance a higher short-term debt through expanded industrialisation, in reality ended by doubling the national debt, putting additional pressure on the government deficit and stunting an anticipated process of locally-driven re-industrialisation.

#### Response from the grass roots

Ordinary Zimbabweans are sorely aware of this process of rapid national impoverisation – the most tangible outcome of the modernising experts' handiwork. And increasingly, Zimbabweans are making the links between ESAP, budget cuts and the decline in the national stan-

dard of living. Their responses to this deteriorating situation have come at different levels. On the one hand, there have been sporadic protests; on the other, there has been a growing institutionalised response from within civil society

As early as 1993, the country experienced its first "IMF" riots when the lifting of subsidies and decontrol of market prices sent the price of bread soaring 30%. A "bread boycott" by township consumers lasted more than two weeks, and saw running street battles between riot police, and women and youth. But though the standard price of bread dropped temporarily, the creeping power of the market ensued; and in January 1996 the price of bread was nearly double that which prompted rioting two years earlier. Other short-lived, often spontaneous protests over the negative market price effects of ESAP liberalisation have met with similar fates.

Trade unions have scrambled to maintain membership and bargaining strength in the face of hostile "liberalisation" measures, while indigenous business lobbies have applied pressure for government assistance in the face of their members' decimation by tough market competition.

Meanwhile, the large majority of Zimbabweans have turned away from their weakened government, [note the very low turnout in the recent election, for example - *ed.*] and focused on their own survival, reliant on their own pocketbooks. If most households had sufficient income, this new order would not pose as much of a dilemma. The reality is that diminished household incomes hold little likelihood of recovery to pre-ESAP levels, for many years to come. While the state continues to borrow heavily to pay back swelling debt obligations, most Zimbabweans will be compelled increasingly to make savings of a more basic sort to sustain their lives – and those of the next generation.

# Gay Bashing in Zimbabwe

## I - Mugabe's Unholy War

BY IDEN WETHERELL

*Iden Wetherell is assistant editor of the weekly Zimbabwe Independent*

Zimbabwe may soon find itself once again embroiled in a row over gay rights as the World Council of Churches prepares to host its 1998 assembly in Harare. The small Southern African country made headlines last year when President Robert Mugabe vilified homosexuals in a speech at the opening of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair whose theme was human rights. "If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual perverts, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organised drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they might claim under the rubrics of individual freedom and human rights?" Mugabe told a shocked audience that included Nobel laureates Nadine Gordimer and Wole Soyinka.

With the bit between his teeth, and basking in the approbation of Zimbabwe's churches, Mugabe thereafter expanded upon this theme at every opportunity, calling upon his ruling ZANU PF's Women's League - an organisation with a record of political thuggery - to arrest individuals they suspected of being gay.

There has been considerable speculation as to what exactly possessed Zimbabwe's president in adopting this extreme position. In the past he has spoken in vitriolic terms about white farmers, Jews, and political critics. But nothing quite matched the malevolence of his gay-bashing campaign. One explanation could be found in

the unlikely coalition that emerged around the issue, comprising conservative whites and black traditionalists, many attached to evangelical churches. Here was a chance for Mugabe to mobilize that constituency while showing that Zimbabwe's oppositional civic movement had gone too far: "Look what happens when society is no longer led by the party and government," appeared to be Mugabe's pitch to voters ahead of national elections held earlier this year.

The president was also undoubtedly seeking to deflect attention from press reports surrounding his own marital record, revealing a highly selective approach to moral indignation. More seriously, he probably hoped his gay-bashing would camouflage misdirection of public resources that has resulted in a 20% reduction in per capita gross domestic product since independence in 1980 and led to very real hardship among the urban poor. Whatever the case, the campaign came to a grinding halt in early September 1995 when Mugabe attended a summit of regional heads of state in Johannesburg. Confronted by a well-orchestrated gay lobby which kept him locked in at Johannesburg airport for several hours on arrival and an unrelentingly hostile press, the Zimbabwean leader came to appreciate at last that his campaign did not enjoy the universal support Zimbabwe's supine state media had suggested. Expecting to be received as the conquering hero who had delivered to South Africa its freedom, he was characterised as an intolerant African dictator.

Thereafter he avoided the issue, except when provoked by hos-

tile demonstrators in Auckland and Maastricht. But it will be interesting to see if he can resist the temptation to become involved in the unfolding row over the World Council of Churches' proposal to host its eighth assembly, scheduled for 1998, in Harare.

The WCC has insisted that a dialogue be opened with gay advocates in Zimbabwe ahead of the assembly and that gay delegates be allowed to express their views at the meeting. The head of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Anglican Bishop of Harare Jonathan Siyachitema, was one of the first to congratulate the president on his anti-gay stance and has since repeated his view that homosexuality is a sin. The law would take its course against gay protesters at the assembly who were not bona fide delegates, he recently said in a clear warning to local gays.

But he is facing mounting opposition. The Zimbabwean Ecumenical Support Service, one of several Zimbabwean based groups preparing for the assembly, has condemned "political appeasement" and accused Siyachitema of compromising his pastoral responsibilities. The gay movement itself is considerably more resilient after last year's baptism of fire and is now fortified by donor funding and a network of international supporters.

While Mugabe may have burnt his fingers on the gay issue last year he is still searching for an issue to express his championship of "African values" while at the same time reflecting his growing resentment of Nelson Mandela's inclusivist "Rainbow Nation" to the south - representing as it does a standing rebuke to Mugabe's own narrow definition of African nationhood. The struggle of

Zimbabwe's tiny gay community (increasingly black in composition) for the right to be heard is only a small part of a much wider struggle for human rights

observance and political reform in the southern African nation of 10 million. Mugabe sees reform of any sort as a threat to his power base and may therefore feel

compelled to weigh in again. In which case Zimbabwe's churches will be expected this time around to do more than merely sanctify presidential bigotry.

## II - Outing the Gay Debate

BY MARC EPPRECHT

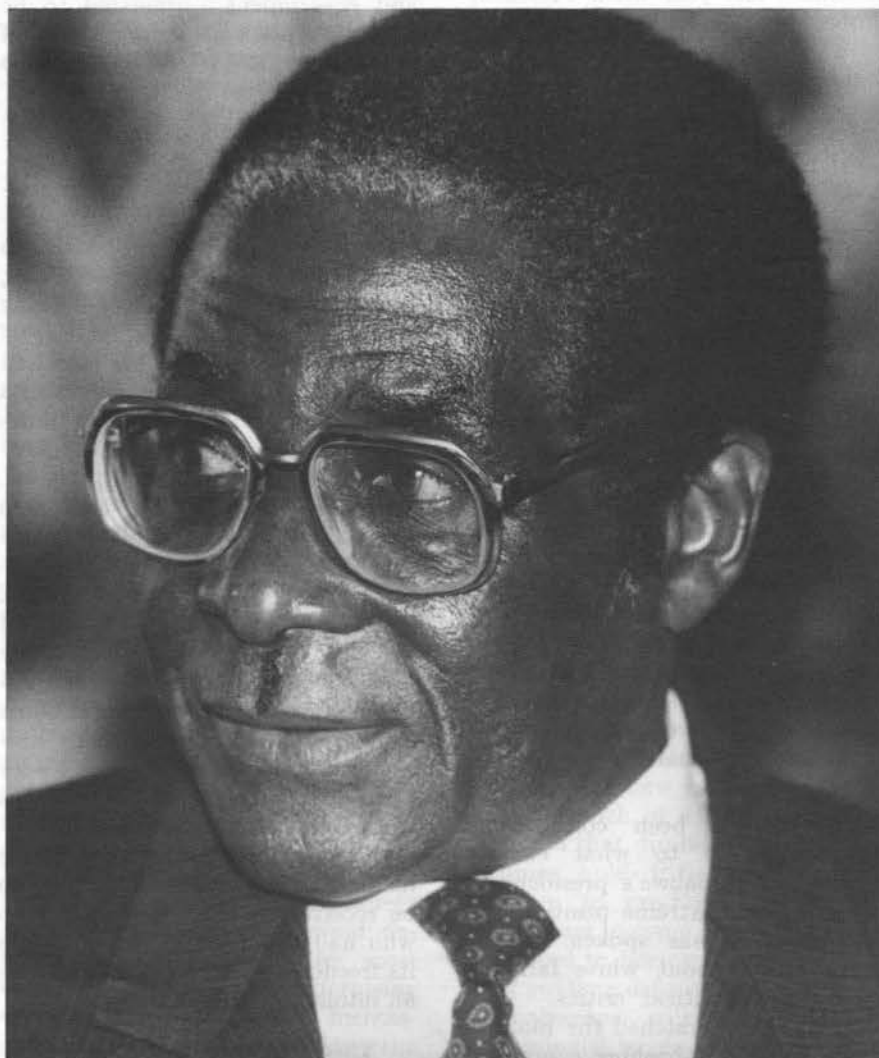
*Marc Epprecht teaches history at the University of Zimbabwe and is the author of several articles on gender and history in southern Africa.*

President Mugabe's "anti-homo" campaign following the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 1995 met with intense criticism and even mockery in the international community. Perhaps most galling to Zimbabwean nationalists on this score was the not-so-discreet condescension shown in some South African papers. Zimbabwe's major aid donors meanwhile applied direct pressure upon Mugabe to temper his remarks. Many Zimbabweans were taken aback by such a strong reaction against what they understand as an internal "cultural" matter. Tolerance of homosexuality (if not homosexuality itself) has thus been widely cited as yet another intolerable case of Western imperialism. The issue is still commonly alluded to in resentful or sarcastic terms in the pro-government media on topics as varied as structural adjustment and corporal punishment in schools.

African nationalists certainly have a point. Who needs reminding that Western hypocrisy on human rights is profound, not least of all on this issue? Compared to Pat Buchanan or to the murderous "gay-bashing" which takes place in North America, Zimbabweans as a whole actually have good reason to be proud of their basically tolerant and reasonable attitude. For example, notwithstanding the vehemence of Mugabe's denunciations of homosexuality and the sometimes violent rhetoric of his

supporters, neither violence nor systematic intimidation of gays and lesbians have ensued. The organization which supposedly offended African values so deeply last year (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe or GALZ) has been granted permission to display its publications at this year's

book fair. Even the government-controlled *Herald* has adopted what amounts to a "don't ask, don't tell" policy towards homosexuality. It often reports non-judgementally on gay rights activities in the West and its editorial line appears to favour the decriminalization of consenting homosexual sex between adults. In this way, it is helping to create an ideological space for acceptance of homosexuality in a society which has



Robert Mugabe

Bill Biggart - Impact Visuals



traditionally regarded it as offensive or nonsensical.

Nonetheless, the bitter debate about whether homosexuals are people deserving the same human rights as other citizens or whether they are "like dogs" (as Mugabe asserted) may be on the verge of a reprise. GALZ has sensibly restrained ambitions for this year's book fair (mainly to publicize its counselling services and answer stereotypical questions about what is homosexuality). However, there is a strong possibility that foreign publishers may display "obscene" or deliberately provocative materials. Freelance homophobes may also disrupt the fair. This possibility is coming at a sensitive time as Zimbabwe is presently negotiating to host the World Council of Churches conference in 1998. The WCC has made it clear that homosexuality will be on the agenda, that it leans towards a liberal policy on the issue, and that it will not tolerate the harassment of its members who are homosexual. This puts it on a direct collision course with many Zimbabwean church leaders and could again bring the country's reputation into international disrepute.

The opening salvo in the looming contest came last month when the president of the Zimbabwean Council of Churches denounced homosexuality as a sin about which there could be no compromise. Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema called for "the law to take its course," meaning that homosexuals should be imprisoned and their literature or educational materials impounded and destroyed. His predecessor as Anglican bishop (Bishop Hatendi) weighed in about a week later with a rambling letter to the *Herald*. While he suggested that the Christian churches in Zimbabwe which tolerate homosexuality are "parrots" of the West, and while he equated homosexuality with HIV/AIDS as another infamous "import," Bishop Hatendi called for an investigation into the actual history of homosexuality in Zimbabwe.

Contradictory as Hatendi's letter was, it was a breakthrough in an important sense. For the first time, a respected public personage suggested that instinctive reaction may have to be qualified if history provided sufficient evidence for tolerance. Interestingly, the *Herald* has not published any letters in response, for or against. It appears that the editor has decided to stop a debate which seems certain ultimately to embarrass President Mugabe. This could also explain the sudden removal of Siyachitema as president of the ZCC (July 4) and his replacement by a man of more moderate reputation and sense of discretion. Negotiations between the WCC, ZCC, GALZ, donors, and the government will continue outside the glare of public controversy.

#### History tells more

This hushed approach may actually be more reflective of Zimbabwean traditions than the confrontational, obsessive homophobia of Christian mission-educated leaders such as Mugabe and Siyachitema. The fact is, homosexual practices were known among black Zimbabweans prior to the coming of whites. They were almost certainly quite rare and they were talked about even less. This rarity can easily be explained without essentialist arguments about African culture or nature. In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, as throughout the region, wealth was primarily measured in people. Children, in addition to their social importance, were also valued as crucial economic and political assets. Heterosexual marriage was the vocation those children were taught from their earliest years. It was also virtually the only sensible path to a relatively secure old-age. Choosing not to marry was thus simply not a viable life choice, for men and women alike, with rare exceptions. Sex for non-reproductive purposes was considered evidence of immaturity or witchcraft.

Universal heterosexual marriage, it must be emphasized, does not necessarily denote universal heterosexual orientation. African cultures throughout the region in fact provide mechanisms to ensure that sterile marriages could still appear to be fruitful. Hence, a man who was "gay" in orientation and repulsed by the very thought of sex with his wife, could invite her to take her own lovers. Lobola ("bride price") ensured that any offspring would be socially recognized as his. Fictions about his own social manhood, with all the economic and political benefits which accrued to it, could be maintained regardless of his actual sexual feelings.

The silence of the guardians of custom, of anthropologists and of Native Commissioners (who tried civil offenses in the rural areas in the colonial years) should therefore not be taken to prove that homosexuality did not exist. Rather, the silence was a way of expressing disapproval of a known phenomenon. Rare admissions of this have been preserved in colonial court documents. In 1921, for example, a Mazoe headman told a Salisbury magistrate that "native custom" dictated a fine of one beast for attempted sodomy. This put the "crime" at about the same level of disapproval as other sexual crimes like adultery.

That ambiguous sexual feelings existed among Africans prior to the coming of whites is also strongly suggested by the appearance of homosexual "crimes" in the very first year of operation of the colonial courts. In 1892, five cases of sodomy and indecent assault by men upon men or boys were tried in Salisbury and Umtali. Of these only one involved a white man. Over the next thirty years, hundreds of other such cases are recorded, the overwhelming majority of which were Africans "assaulting" Africans. They took place at the mines, on commercial farms, in urban compounds, at police camps, in prisons, and even in the townships where female prosti-

tutes were readily available. In most of these cases the men practiced safe sex, that is, ejaculation between the thighs. The men were from both outside and within Zimbabwe.

A small number of the accused appeared before the courts as repeat offenders, and we may probably assume that these men actually were "gay" in the sense of preferring sex with other males over sex with women. The majority of cases, however, seem to have been men who considered themselves heterosexual. They only indulged in sex with males for what we might call strategic or convenience reasons. Finding a proper wife was difficult for migrant workers while prostitutes were often downright dangerous. In the cramped quarters which migrant workers commonly shared, their bodies squeezed against each other under a single blanket, sex between men also commonly happened "by accident."

Now courts, by their nature, give testimony to non-consensual rather than consensual sex. People in love or who have made mutually agreeable economic arrangements rarely appear before them. Not surprisingly, therefore, the courts of early colonial Zimbabwe principally record cases involving "accidents," "dreams," homosexual rape or coercion of "picannins" (boys or young men). Yet ample evidence also attests to relatively long-term, apparently stable homosexual relationships which went sour. In one case from Kadoma in 1915, the "husband" actually paid lobola for his "wife" to his "father-in-law." The "marriage" came to court because the "wife" was unhappy with the presents he was receiving.

Homosexual relationships among men were in fact commonly mediated by cash and presents in much the same way as scholars have found in the "mine marriages" of Johannesburg (see T. Dunbar Moodie's and Patrick Harries' recent books on male migrant culture in South

Africa). In other words, Zimbabwe was typical of other industrializing areas in the region. When large numbers of men were uprooted from their communities and denied the means to manhood as it was traditionally understood, they developed new expressions of masculinity. This included not only relatively open homosexuality (including ritual transvestism at some mines). Signifiers of real manliness for African men in this oppressive context also included heterosexual prostitution and predatory (as opposed to responsible, marriage and child-oriented) sex.

To identify a relationship between racial capitalist structures, urbanization, and increasingly divergent sexual identities and practices among Africans is not the same as saying "the whites did it!" (that is, introduced perversion). On the contrary, African men who engaged in homosexual practices were acutely conscious that whites disapproved. One of the striking ironies of the "anti-homo" chauvinism of Zimbabwean nationalists these days is that eighty or a hundred years ago it was Europeans who were most vocally scandalized by African men's behaviour. There was much hypocrisy in this regard, no doubt, but the salient point is that African men did not look to Europeans for lessons.

Simplistic, functionalist or apologetic explanations of male homosexual practices are clearly difficult to sustain in the face of the historical evidence. There has been a diversity of homosexual relationships among African men which is all the more remarkable given the disapproving glare of both custom and colonial ideologies. Although historical evidence of female sexuality is infinitely more difficult to come by, we may probably assume that it was similarly more diverse than cultural chauvinists would like us to believe.

At present, GALZ is keeping a low profile, leaving such research (and even some of their own leadership) to straights and foreigners.

They have, however, quietly but significantly strengthened their position over the past year. Above all they have acquired formidable international friends, including those with cash. The Dutch agency Hivos has donated \$600,000 to GALZ as a part of its mandate to help build a plural and democratic society. This will enable it to open a permanent office with paid rather than volunteer co-ordinators. South of the border, sexual orientation has been enshrined as a human right in the new constitution, promising the emergence of a lively and politically combative queer community there. Voices have also emerged within Zimbabwe to challenge the party line. The recent launch of the sympathetic weekly newspaper, *Zimbabwe Independent*, promises to provide an especially influential voice on this issue.

Clearly, matters relating to sexuality are difficult at any time in any context. Here in Zimbabwe they are all the more sensitive on account of the long history of imperialist moralizing and hypocrisy. Yet the climate is changing. At least one in ten Zimbabweans is HIV positive and debate about sexual practices is necessarily coming out into the open. Matters which were hitherto considered shameful are now routinely discussed in the mass media. In sharp contrast to the knee-jerk homophobia of some leaders, the more pronounced trend is thus toward increasingly forthright discussions of sexuality and patriarchy, of which homophobia is an important aspect. This surely bodes well both for people's health and for the emergence of a kind of democracy which is inclusive and respectful of minority groups.

One thing is certain. If the "anti-homo" campaign does take off again this year, Zimbabwean intellectuals will be less able than before to sit on the fence or to hide behind specious arguments about culture or "there are more pressing issues." It promises to be a lively fair.

# Who Governs? NGOs in Rural Mozambique

BY ALEXANDER COSTY

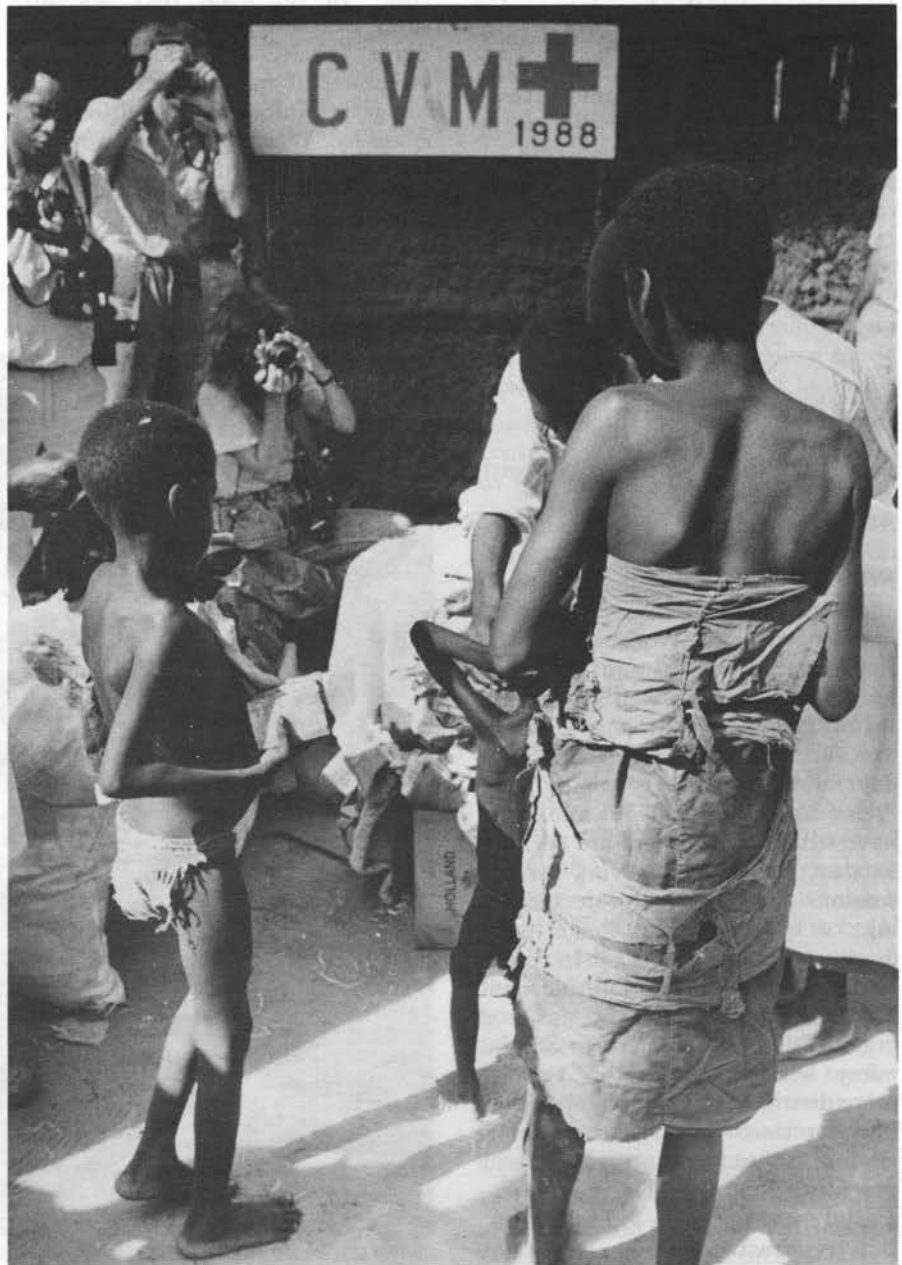
*Alexander Costy, a graduate student at the University of Toronto, is presently conducting research on Mozambique's transition to peace.*

A recent United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) document on War-Torn Societies described postwar transitions in the following terms: "The historical time span from war to peace is a long period in which both seem to co-exist, where peace has come to some areas but not to others, where conflict lingers and remains an omnipresent threat and occasionally flares up again. Reconstruction and rebuilding take place throughout this period." (UNRISD, *Rebuilding War-Torn Societies*. Geneva: 1995. p. 5)

Indeed, a troubling combination of normality and insecurity seems to have settled across the districts and localities between the Rio Save and the Zambezi in the province of Sofala. On the one hand, there are readily visible signs of peace: Dozens of new primary schools and rural clinics have been built under the UNHCR's (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) Quick Impact Projects (QUIPs) recovery programme, and extensive demining and road rehabilitation have restored links between town and country. Furthermore, with demobilisation, repatriation and the elections behind them, it would seem that Sofala's inhabitants now stand ready for the next step toward political recovery: state decentralisation and the democratisation of local politics. On the other hand, however, one senses that an unfinished war is still being waged

in the province. As a Renamo stronghold during the conflict, some areas of Sofala Province continue to be contested by government and ele-

ments of the former rebel movement. A pressing problem of "dual administration" prevails, whereby officially unrecognised Renamo author-



Antonio Muchave — AIM — Impact Visuals



ities claim effective control over substantial tracts of territory, to the exclusion of the state, making access by government workers difficult and, on occasion, dangerous.

A prominent feature of this post-war landscape is the impressive array of international and (to a lesser extent) national non-governmental organisations engaged in Sofala's recovery process. There is no question that NGOs have helped in countless ways to lay the foundations for peace in the province. Yet they may also be sustaining "lingering" local conflicts and, to some extent, impeding political reconciliation in a way that can ultimately subvert prospects for decentralised democracy. In what follows, and with a cautious eye on current plans for decentralisation and the holding of local elections, I take this opportunity to offer a few "first impressions" about some untended political side-effects of humanitarian intervention in Sofala's troubled districts.

### Marginalising local government

At the height of the emergency period between 1991 and 1994, the NGO roster in Sofala included some of the biggest names in humanitarian assistance, like World Vision, the Lutheran Federation and Médecins sans Frontières, as well as a wide variety of smaller European, American and South African groups. Today, in this transitory phase from "relief-to-development," while some have withdrawn, others are seeking to stay, either by applying for extensions to emergency project funding, or by bidding for longer-term development contracts. In early 1996, at least twenty international NGOs and six prominent national organisations were active in Sofala, many with operations in two or more districts. In their ongoing support for resettlement and demobilisation, political re-integration and decentralization, NGOs provide essential services: from food distribution to infrastructure rehabilitation,

health, education, water and sanitation, demining, agricultural extension and vocational training. Given their relative organisational strength and economic weight, NGOs have had significant impact on Sofala's recovery, not only in material terms, but also politically.

In the national capital, NGOs must contend with ministries, donor governments and multi-lateral agencies. In the field, they are anything but small fry. By local standards, the NGOs working in Sofala are powerful organisations. Detailed budgetary information is difficult to come by. What is clear, however, is that with individual annual budgets of U.S.\$200,000 and up, even modest NGO projects are able to mobilise human and material resources which, for the moment at least, far exceed those of local authorities.

As a result, NGOs are strongly positioned to act effectively to produce results in key relief and development sectors. Though they are formally bound to fulfil basic project requirements negotiated with the government, NGOs in practice enjoy a wide margin of discretion in deciding the modalities and timing of their interventions in the districts, and often leave little room for government input in day-to-day operations. Frequently, agencies run "closed shops" which do not conform to government criteria or priorities for the region. One US-based food relief group which is now expanding into agricultural extension work explained that they welcomed the presence of Department of Agriculture officials "in so far as they are willing to participate in the training programmes we operate," admitting that they run a "separate pro-



Alirio Chiziane - AIM - Impact Visuals

gramme in the province." In the health sector, too, NGOs are notorious for running alternative systems, staffing newly built clinics with medical workers whose professional qualifications are not recognised by provincial health authorities.

In the districts, considerable facing-off occurs between local administrations and NGO workers. Much of it revolves around the nuts-and-bolts issues of access to food and fuel supplies, vehicles and power generators, and other coveted assets of international assistance which, from the perspective of local communities, are strongly associated not only with welfare, but also with power and prestige. Typically, control over the allocation and use of these resources remains overwhelmingly in the hands of NGO personnel for the duration of the project. Local officials complain of being cut off from access to vehicles and other resources, which they see as having been formally assigned to them, and thus being denied the chance to improve their working standards and performance. Perhaps not without reason, NGO workers are wary of officials' personal or political motives when requests are made for car keys or food supplies.

But a more fundamental issue arises. At a time when district authorities are preparing to take on new administrative functions and responsibilities under the 1993 Municipalities Law, they are feeling increasingly marginalised. This stems partly from the officials' infrequent contacts with their superiors in the provincial capital. Indeed, local officials have few opportunities to leave their district for consultations in Beira and, unhappily, few city bureaucrats are willing to endure the penury of long travel and poor accommodation associated with evaluation tours in most districts. NGO workers, by contrast, move continuously between city and field bases, and maintain daily radio contact with Beira. Recent interviews with Caia and Gorongosa officials point

to further erosion of already weak links between provincial and local levels of government, to a reinforcement of suspicions, and a sense of alienation that is potentially damaging to intergovernmental relations.

Increasingly, marginalisation also appears to define the relationship between district authorities and the community. Where it can, government routinely takes credit for the material benefits which NGOs bring to communities in the form of credits, clinics, wells and new bridges or schools. But inhabitants are well aware of the overwhelming economic superiority of the outside agencies operating in their midst. NGOs easily become the primary food or wage providers in a district, in some cases employing dozens of local labourers, extensionists, technical and logistics personnel, drivers and guards. As a result, wages and food quotas become inflated to the point where district authorities are unable to compete. By contrast to NGOs which so efficiently vaccinate, rehabilitate, build and employ, local government is seen to have little to offer on its own. Once again, on the eve of decentralisation, district administrations are being drained in advance, not only of valuable human resources, but also of the popular legitimacy and support upon which, paradoxically, they must increasingly depend.

#### Entering the political fray

Many NGOs deliberately intervene in Renamo-dominated areas with the explicit objective of facilitating their political "integration" into the reconstruction and pacification process. As politically "neutral" actors they have been able to intervene where government cannot. Indeed, NGOs have played a crucial role in making inroads into areas previously inaccessible to government workers, such as the remote communities of Maringue, Moanza and Cheringoma districts. Given recent history, NGOs are simply more acceptable in Renamo-controlled areas than agents of the former enemy and

most observers, including the government itself, are quick to recognize this.

But can NGOs remain neutral in a politicised environment? In the experience of a *Diario* correspondent who covers the troubled districts: "NGOs must adopt a totally political attitude. In a certain way they must be supportive of Renamo, not because they support it politically, but in order to better integrate themselves with the local community. They draw up programmes which, in one way or another, support Renamo. This is strictly in order for NGOs to achieve their own technical objectives. The international NGO in Moanza has had to do this in order to expand the health service throughout the area. In Cheringoma, too, the NGOs have had to cater to the desires of the (Renamo) political leadership in order to work with the community." Not surprisingly, similar claims have been made by Renamo elements located in government controlled areas, who view NGOs as supporting government policy to their detriment.

Despite their technical emphasis, then, an implicit politicisation of NGOs can occur in the more troubled districts. Moreover, in districts where political power and administrative control are under dispute, the situation is more complex than simply making peace with the "powers that be." NGO interventions become the object of political flare-ups between the government and Renamo, and foreign agencies are quickly blamed for taking sides. NGOs must thus cater to both sides simultaneously. In the words of one field director: "When they enter these districts, they contact the administration. But if they do not open up to Renamo, they will create tensions. Renamo may prevent the population from participating in the project or responding to it."

On paper, the policy of NGOs to intervene in disputed districts reflects their desire to promote rec-

conciliation, by "integrating" opposing political factions and their constituencies into a single, nationwide process of reconstruction and development. In practice, however, this is clearly problematic. True, NGOs in many cases possess the financial clout to affect the local environment, but they do not appear to be able to neutralize it politically. Instead, they can be absorbed into it, and become part of the local or provincial power equation. For local leaders in exceptionally distressed areas like these, and for the community at large, the material and political stakes involved in relief and development projects are extremely high. In their struggle for popular support, Renamo leaders and government cadres alike jump at every opportunity to claim credit for themselves or vilify the opponent. Many of these opportunities, apparently, are supplied by NGO activities. NGOs engaging in a policy of equitable treatment seem to be treading the fine line between a desired political reconciliation and the unintended reproduction of local conflicts among wartime protagonists.

### Anointing the new prophets

Beyond the political side-effects of what are primarily technical relief and development operations, some NGOs in Sofala are engaged in the business of "changing attitudes and perceptions" about the recent past, and "discussing alternatives" about the future. In Beira, this consists of organising political seminars and workshops to strengthen local civil society, mainly by encouraging self-help and promoting a new form of inclusive, pluralised politics. These projects, financed by foreign groups and implemented by local ones like KULIMA and ADESSO, draw representatives from a wide cross section of Beira's emerging, youthful middle class: the political parties, the professions and the local media and social and cultural leaders. Discussion topics draw from the important development

issues of the day: the role of individuals and local groups in a democratic society, decentralisation, reconciliation and empowerment. Special attention is given to the problems of demobilisation, and to the prospects and challenges faced by women, children, the youth, the elderly, by emergent NGOs and small business, by the press and political parties.

For now, these political initiatives are held mainly in the city. But a principle objective for KULIMA in the coming months is to bring civil society to the countryside, "...to the districts in order to do the same type of work we have been doing here in the city. The districts have been destroyed. We can help by creating carpenters' associations and potters' associations. So through information seminars and courses we will be able to contribute." ADESSO's director explains. "We talk a lot about civil society here in Africa because our society is disturbed and confused. The basis of all these ills is in the formal (government) structures." Like KULIMA, his group is poised for action in the countryside, awaiting only the funds to begin "to promote the civil society, educate the people around the province to have a culture of production."

For the districts, these short statements have some serious implications. District administrators can expect the influx of NGOs to continue. This may be a good sign, but not necessarily. It may continue to reproduce some of the problems already discussed. True, these problems will not now be posed so much by direct international intervention as by enthusiastic national non-governmental agencies from Beira. Statements by groups like ADESSO, KULIMA and others betray a certain city smugness about the lessons that rural communities must now learn and the ethics they must adopt, and an unsettling confidence in the civilising effect of their own organisational structures and philosophies. Paradoxically, zealous city talk about rural empowerment

and mobilisation is not unlike the rhetoric employed by the now discredited *grupos dinamizadores*, and could well receive a similarly ambivalent response from peasants.

Post-war transitions, continues the UNRISD study, are moments of confusion about the relative powers and responsibilities of governments and of the many humanitarian actors which arrive on the scene. There is ambiguity over the relationship "between the international community, and what remains of state and local authorities, and remains of civil society." The challenge is to address the question of "what should and can be the relative role, responsibility and authority of external and local actors in defining appropriate policies and measures to sustain peace and rebuild war-torn countries."

This challenge is especially salient for the people of Sofala. Having moved from war to peace and then to multi-party democracy, the province now readies itself for a difficult but exciting experiment in local democracy. District administrations have been severely weakened by years of fighting, population movements, and more recently, the overwhelming burden of international humanitarian assistance. If the local elections are to mean anything, the new equation must make ample room for local administrators to find legitimacy and confidence among their constituents, to become more closely involved with the problems and concerns of the communities which they will serve, to provide a greater measure of political and economic security in their districts and to offer tangible services and local development policy guidance. This means that NGO interventions, national or international, technical or more explicitly political, must take a back seat in local political and economic life. Continuing to ignore or bypass local governments, or to throw their weight around in local politics as they appear presently to do, may damage the democratisation process.



# Liberalizing AIDS in Africa: The World Bank Role

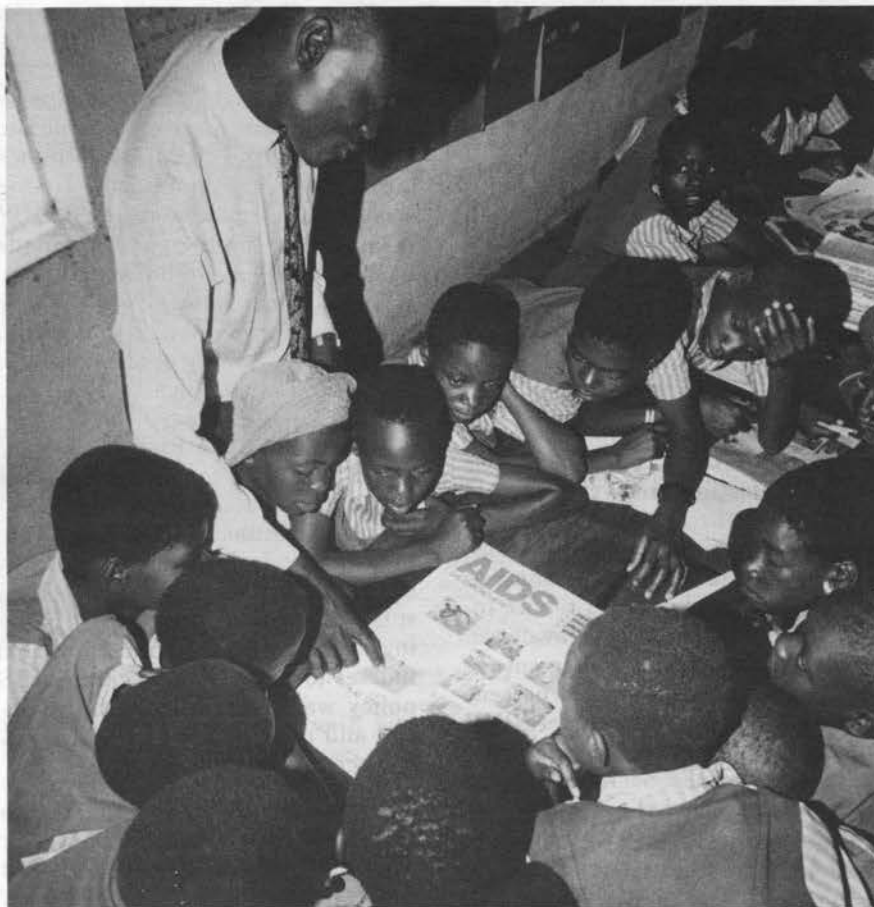
BY COLLEEN O'MANIQUE

Based at Toronto's York University, Colleen O'Manique has done extensive work and research on the issue of AIDS in Uganda.

"Get AIDS and see the World." This rather caustic comment came from one of the participants at the International Conference on AIDS in Paris in 1990, a reflection on the epidemic of conferences that accompanied the global spread of HIV. Needless to say, very few in the global conference circuit that this most recent pandemic has created are African. According to the 1994 report *AIDS in the World*, 90 percent of global resources for AIDS prevention are concentrated in North America and Europe, areas representing 20 percent of the global population and 16 percent of HIV-infected people. Sub-saharan Africa's share, with 10 percent of the world's population and 66 percent of infections, is only 2.8 percent.

Still, AIDS programmes and projects have mushroomed on the African continent in line with the steady growth of the global AIDS industry. Many grassroots organizations are attempting to mitigate the devastating impact that AIDS deaths are having in their communities. But the majority of interventions remain externally-funded and donor-driven. Moreover, although general health care expenditure either remained static or declined throughout the continent in line with fiscal restructuring, funding for AIDS-specific programmes continued to climb.

The World Health Organization's Global Program on AIDS (WHO/GPA) led the global institutional response from 1986. The



Caleb Kenna - Impact Visuals

WHO/GPA was the principle coordinating and funding mechanism for countries receiving bilateral and multilateral development assistance for AIDS control and prevention. Recently, however, the program was reorganized to integrate other UN-sponsored initiatives more closely with those of the WHO.

In January of 1996, UN AIDS officially became operational, combining WHO's programme with those of UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank. The reorganization is meant, in the words of new Director Dr. Peter Piot, ... "to make UN AIDS a more efficient, client friendly

programme... an informal global alliance bound by a common commitment to challenging AIDS" (*AIDS and Society Bulletin*, July/August 1995 p.9). UN AIDS came out of a growing concern within the UN system that WHO's approach was too narrowly medical and technicist to deal adequately with the emerging impacts and consequences of the various AIDS epidemics.

Within UN AIDS, the WHO is expected to remain central to country-level programming, but the UNDP takes over the official coordinating role. Needless to say, the World Bank is the strongest finan-

cial power. Corresponding to the Bank's recent interest in social policy, its influence in shaping the response to AIDS is potentially quite significant.

Thus far, the evidence suggests that the World Bank's response to AIDS fits firmly into the neoliberal canon, which valorizes the individual, privatization, neo-charity, and cost-recovery, all the while ignoring the social and political contexts fuelling the particular epidemics in Africa.

So, how is one to understand the dimensions of this epidemic and what can we expect from the World Bank in this new "client friendly" alliance?

### AIDS in Africa

The past decade saw AIDS grow to epidemic and tragic proportions in Sub-saharan Africa. Although levels of HIV infection were consistently higher in central and east Africa, today no African region remains untouched and each year countries with previously low rates report increasing incidence of seroprevalence. According to the Department of Health in South Africa, 7.6 percent of sexually active adults were HIV positive at the end of 1994, up from 4.5 percent at the beginning of the year. Surveys carried out in the rest of the southern African region reveal similarly significant rises.

Although other health conditions remain statistically more important in Africa, to the extent that deaths from other communicable infectious diseases, parasitic diseases and malnutrition still outnumber those from AIDS, rising levels of HIV infection pose problems unique to the virus. AIDS disproportionately affects the most productive sector of the population. The most obvious consequences include rising dependency ratios, productivity losses in agriculture and industry, and the loss of people with critical talents and rare skills.

HIV infection aggravates other infectious diseases as the number

of people with weak immunity climbs. Less than a decade ago, tuberculosis was considered a stable, endemic health problem; today, in association with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, tuberculosis is resurgent. The interaction of the two suggests a view of a future with rapidly worsening epidemics, each intensifying the other.

The increased burden of disease places immense pressure on public health facilities and undermines familial and community coping strategies. In many countries AIDS is expected to reverse the gains made in child survival and life expectancy. HIV epidemics in Africa will hence have devastating long-term social, economic and political consequences unique to the continent.

The public health response to AIDS in Africa evolved in a context of massive debt crises and draconian adjustment and restructuring programs, which included the withdrawal of the state from the social spheres, privatization, and opening up national economies to global market forces. In this regard, AIDS policy was formulated within a social and political context which circumscribed policy choices.

But the problem goes deeper. AIDS policy in African countries increasingly reflects the broader neoliberal agenda that accompanies the current global order. Within the emerging neoliberal consensus, individuals and families must become "empowered" at the local level to protect themselves from infection and to cope with the multiple effects of the epidemic. Added to the itinerary of AIDS control programmes are income generation for women, women's legal education, programmes targeted at orphans (school fees relief, income generation, support for extended families), and other interventions aimed at mitigating the social and economic impact of the epidemic, or at "empowering" people and communities to do so for themselves.

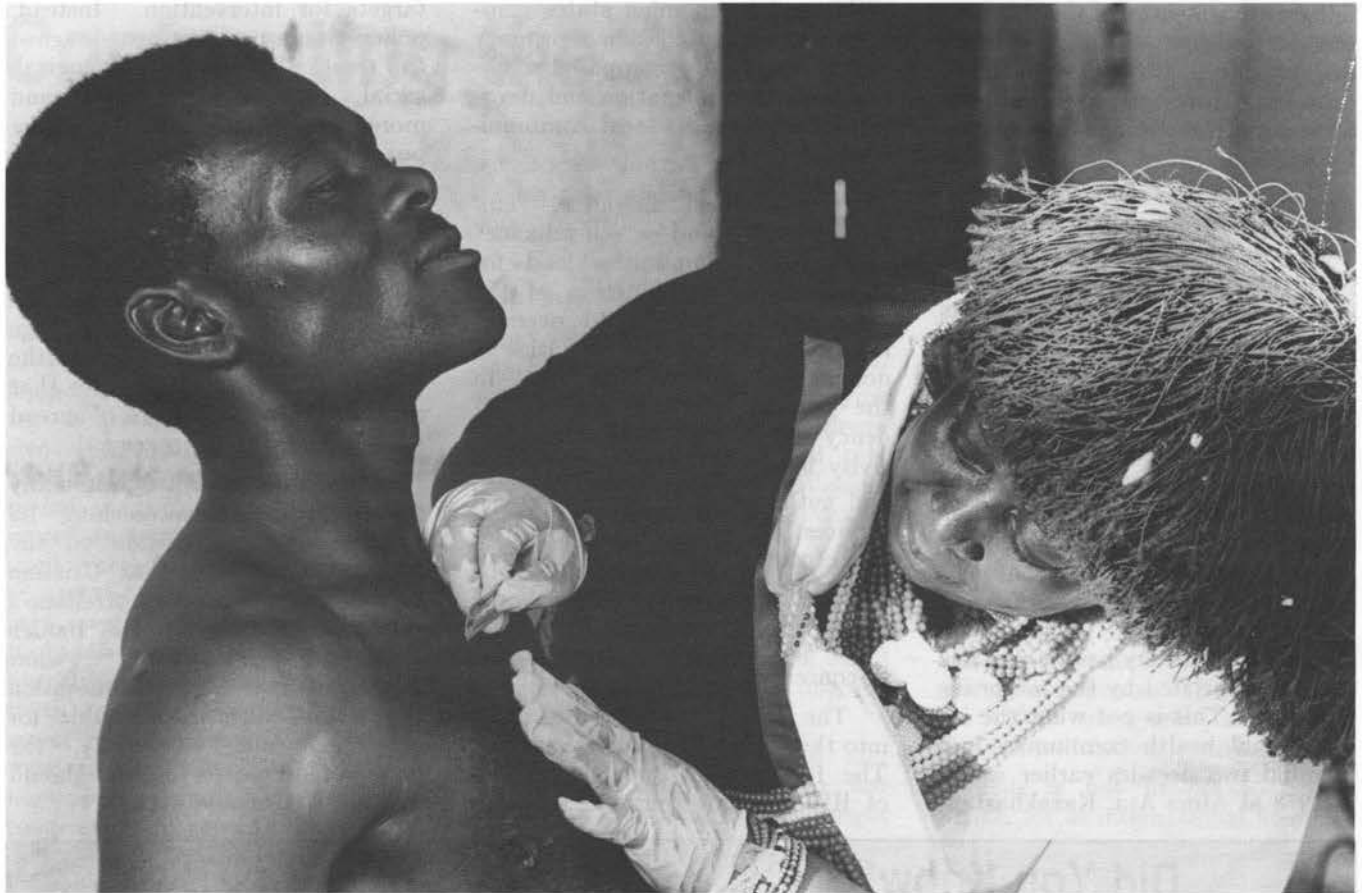
### The World Bank AIDS agenda

These ideas are clearly articulated in the 1993 World Development Report *Investing in Health*, which marked the beginning of the World Bank's hijacking of the global health agenda away from WHO. Global AIDS policy is no exception. One of the five main clusters of public health care interventions elaborated in the report is an AIDS prevention program and educational program targeting "high risk" groups, which includes the regulation and control of sources of blood transmission as well as community treatment of the sick through low-cost protocols.

Consistent with the health policy proposed by the World Bank's *Investing in Health*, AIDS policy is being brought into line with the neoliberal ideology that ascribes health mainly to the private domain, with the public sector responsible only for the most minimal cluster of vertical, cost-effective interventions targeted at the poor, or with regard to AIDS, at "high risk" groups. The "private sphere" consists of three very different social actors; the individual and the family (and here, women are singled out as important health promoters and caregivers), charities and NGOs, and private businesses.

The global multisectoral strategy arrived at a moment when the factors augmenting HIV spread are further exacerbated by globalization, these factors themselves linked to the policies of multilateral institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. The Bank, however, relinquishes any responsibility for its own role in the process. The October 1995 article "Bank Rattled by Claim that Policies spread HIV" in *AIDS Analysis Africa* documents the Bank's response to a report which analyzed the role of structural adjustment programs in promoting conditions that facilitate the spread of HIV.

The World Bank responded that such claims were "unscientific" and



Gisele Wulfsohn - Impact Visuals

*As part of an AIDS education workshop, a traditional healer does skin piercing using rubber gloves and sterilized blades*

a “bad joke.” To quote World Bank health economist Phillip Musgrove: “We accept that economic development helps spread AIDS, that is true of almost any disease ... It sounds clever to say that development should be tailored to take account of this, but no-one really knows how to do that. People talk about promoting local development, but that means taking the economy back 50 years” (p.15).

Nevertheless, the authors of the report, Peter Lurie, Robert Lowe and Percy Hintzen, join a growing number of critics analyzing the relationship between structural adjustment and rising levels of HIV infection. Such factors as increased labour migration and the separation of households, the high demand for family labour in the face of declining incomes, the growing vulnerabil-

ity of women, who, faced with limited options, engage in transactional sex in order to feed their families or meet school fees; these are the social and economic realities with which individuals live and make “choices” concerning sexual behaviour. Although most commonly understood as a disease provoked by high levels of “promiscuity,” the conditions that augment the spread of HIV in Sub-saharan Africa are no different than those that fuel other diseases. Underlying “biological” and “behavioral” factors are unequal gender relations, shrinking rural subsistence economies, increased migration and urbanization, instability and civil war.

The World Bank spelled out its response to AIDS clearly in its *AIDS Assessment and Planning Study of Tanzania*. This study identified the “most promising” options as (1)

the establishment of a comprehensive STD/HIV prevention and control program to decrease the risk of HIV infection for those with treatable STDs; (2) active condom promotion for both disease prevention and family planning; (3) IEC (Information, Education, Communication) messages specifically targeted to different audiences to change behaviour; (4) the reduction of the need for blood transfusions; (5) the treatment of AIDS at primary facilities and at home rather than at hospitals to realize significant cost savings. In addition, these more general policies are recommended: intensifying public expenditure review and control, with a view to raising allocations to the health sector through reductions elsewhere, while also reducing inefficiencies within the health system; pursuing economic reform vigorously, so that the



full growth potential of the economy can be realized; seeking increased external funds, through donors and commercial investors, to compensate for reduced domestic savings caused by AIDS.

This response reflects, or at the very least is consistent with, the broader neo-liberal political agenda to the extent that, apart from a few vertical, technicist interventions such as condom distribution and STD treatment, people with AIDS are left to fend for themselves until the "full growth potential" of the economy can be realized. The burden of the multiple impacts of AIDS falls on "local communities" (read women) who are to be "empowered" to "cope better" through "community-based strategies" and "coping mechanisms." The radical discourse of primary health care has been appropriated by the major institutions. This is not what the international health community had in mind two decades earlier when, in 1978 at Alma Ata, Kazakhstan,

WHO and its member states committed to a holistic vision of primary health care that encompassed socio-economic transformation and devolution of power to local communities.

In neo-liberal discourse, "empowerment" and "self-reliance" mean that communities fend for themselves – the function of the state reduced merely to overseeing or monitoring the activities of donors and private charities. In the context of increased dependency ratios, AIDS-related productivity losses, shifting demographics and cutbacks in health and social services, prospects for the "realization of the full potential of the economy" through vigorous economic reform seem rather grim, caring for AIDS patients at home somewhat ill-conceived.

The policy response fits nicely into the World Bank global agenda. The factors that fuel the spread of HIV are not considered proper

targets for intervention. Instead, policies and projects are designed to treat the effects (biological, social, economic) of AIDS, and more importantly to "empower people" to better cope with the outcome of HIV-related deaths or protect themselves from infection. The World Bank understanding of "African AIDS" is largely a depoliticized articulation to the extent that it fails to acknowledge the vested interests that underlie the current global order, an order that deeply shapes the pattern of spread of HIV, and disease in general.

At the same time it is profoundly political, further entrenching its social and moral agenda on the African continent. Asa Cristina Laurell and Oliva López Arellano's comments on the World Bank's vision for health ring true: "... what is really at stake is the determination of whose health is profitable for investment and, eventually, the power of decision over who should live and who should die."

## Did You Know? Facts about AIDS/HIV and TB

### Botswana

Results of a 1992 AIDS testing of almost 400 teachers and government officials found that 42 percent were HIV-positive.

According to 1994 statistics, there were 125,000 people with HIV out a total population of 1.4 million.

### South Africa

Ninety thousand cases of tuberculosis were reported in 1995 and 3,000 people were expected to die from the disease in that year.

In 1989 the TB notification rate among coloureds in South Africa was 548 per 100,000. By 1993 it had reached 670 per 100,000 and by 1994 it was 726.

Among Africans, the TB notification rate in 1994 was 180 per 100,000. In 1989 it had been 198 per 100,000.

Among Asians it was 43 per 100,000 in 1994 and among whites it was 17 per 100,000.

For the overall population, the TB notification rate in 1994 was 205 per 100,000. In 1989 it was 211 per 100,000, so not much progress was made during those five years.

Dr Brian Williams, director of the Epidemiology Research Unit of the Medical Research Council, says South Africa may have the highest rate of TB in the world.

In late 1993, 30 percent of TB patients in Johannesburg hospitals were HIV-positive.

One in every five women visiting ante-natal clinics is HIV infected.

In KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, 14.4 percent of the residents are infected, compared to a national average of 7.57 percent.

### Zimbabwe

The number of new TB cases rose from 6,002 in 1988 to 6,925 in 1989. The number then shot up to 8,987 in 1990, 12,130 in 1991, 15,237 in 1992, 20,125 in 1993, and 23,959 in 1994.

AIDS is the leading killer of children under five in the country.

If current projections hold, one-third of children in Zimbabwe will be orphaned by the year 2010.

*Data courtesy of Africa Information Afrique (AIA) Information on AIA can be obtained by emailing aia-can@web.net*

# Confronting the ANC's Thatcherism

BY PATRICK BOND

*Patrick Bond is completing books on South Africa and Zimbabwe for publication later this year.*

"Globalisation" – which amounts mainly to the near total command of the international economy by financial- and merchant-based capital – is forcing a world-wide progressive rethink of the nature of political parties, their relation to social movements, and the nature of government power. In South Africa we see significant fractures opening within and around the Mass Democratic Movement over what concessions should be made to the twin evils of neoliberalism and statism. It boils down to the problem of whether – as a senior SA Communist Party parliamentarian expressed it at an economic policy seminar late last year – progressives in government are now merely managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie.

The problem became acute at the time this issue of *Southern Africa Report* was going to press, as the SACP attempted to extricate itself from an embarrassing predicament. Having endorsed the government's conservative economic strategy, SACP intellectual Jeremy Cronin tried to explain that this was "not just running cover for the ANC and government," but rather a chance to debate a long-awaited policy.

The *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* policy document [see sidebar] launched by Trevor Manuel in mid-June quickly earned the newly-installed Finance Minister the nickname "Trevor Thatcher" from the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper. Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin, a former socialist "syndicalist" (and current SACP member) who had served as Cosatu's main strategist during the 1980s, was even more involved in the details, as su-

pervisor of the overwhelmingly orthodox team that specified the economic model.

## Capitulation to capital

What the hell, then, was the SACP doing on the sidelines offering a ringing endorsement? Denying that arms were twisted by Erwin and other ministers, Cronin told the *Mail & Guardian*, "Wisdom informed us that a certain degree of support is important." And, added the formal SACP statement, there would be a chance to take forward "discussion, elaboration and debate" because "questions of detail and implementation require ongoing scrutiny."

Such questions of detail and implementation may or may not include calculations of the length

of time before "IMF riots" break out over South Africa's home-grown structural adjustment. In May, the International Institute of Finance in Washington, DC projected that foreign money now parked in South Africa (where real interest rates are at least triple those of advanced capitalist countries) could expect only eight months of safety. "The three-year perspective is terrible and the five-year perspective is impossible." Yet no one on the left is talking of a pre-revolutionary situation, given that South Africa's progressive forces (and their petty-bourgeois leaderships) tend to buckle, at key moments, to pressure to blindly back the ANC's ruling crew, and, in the process, police their constituents.

This is not unique to South Africa, for as international financial



Rodger Bosch – Impact Visuals

analyst Simon Nocera told the *Wall Street Journal* in May, "The only guys who have the credibility to implement tough fiscal and monetary policy are the left." In South Africa, some fractions of the left – now serving in government – have gone further right than anyone would have dared predict, leaving their ex-comrades in labour and social movements bewildered.

Hence the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) appears paralysed by misgivings over "land invasions" by the land-starved urban homeless, and willingly endorses fruitless Operation Masakhane efforts to make township residents pay for substandard services that they cannot even afford. (To be fair, progressives in SANCO wring hands about this behind the scenes, and on the optimistic side, the loose federation of civics is also back to mass action against financial institutions, regularly lambasting the incompetent housing ministry for its bank-centred, developer-driven policy.)

And there is certainly broader resistance to neo-lib state policy – reflected in disgust over the economic plan within Cosatu and amongst a younger generation within the SACP, for instance – and this now extends across nearly the entire spectrum of social movements. Nearly every progressive social force – urban communities, the rural landless, arts and culture activists, community health workers, disabled people, environmentalists (until Pallo Jordan took over the ministry) and progressive trade unionists – are intensely pissed off with their counterpart government department, whether because of sabotage-minded old guard technocrats, slick plans by yuppie policy wonks or piteous ministerial leadership.

But how to translate bitter disappointment into a more general critique and a breakthrough strategy? Can developmental statism, "people-driven" approaches and tra-

ditional socialist conceptions of challenging capitalist state power coexist? Not easily, it seems.

### Looking backward to the future

Are there hints to be found in the vibrant legacy of past social struggle? At least one fairly popular attempt at reconciliation emerged from the civil society debates of the early 1990s, and may be worth reviewing. Crudely compressing the logical circularity, the argument proceeds as follows:

a) mass social and labour movements are crucial transformative forces in society because – notwithstanding their many flaws – they most authentically reflect the aspirations of their working-class, poor and otherwise oppressed constituents;

b) the movements' social demands have originated through years of concrete struggle against racism, capitalism and patriarchy, and following from the residual power of these oppressive forces, the fulfilment of long-sought demands requires the firm hand of a progressive, democratic state;

c) such a state must be "strong but slim" so that resources can be captured and redistributed on the one hand, but on the other hand these resources must be carefully channelled through a new breed of accountable "comrade" civil servants to accountable comrades at the civil society base in order that (probably inevitable) bureaucratisation and petty-bourgeoisification do not wash away radical organic initiatives; and

d) in ensuring the durability of a), b) and c), there is an urgent need to intensify broader social struggles and demands for redistributive policies, while recognising that given the balance of forces the state will not offer a basis for socialist transformation in the near future, and that instead only strengthened, class-conscious, non-racial, non-sexist social and labour movements – and their or-

ganisational component parts – can take forward an agenda of true social change.

Within this position there has always been a healthy debate about whether and when to launch or to strengthen a left political party that will more forcefully complement social and labour movements, with many leading comrades anticipating growing ideological coordination from the SACP (but others having doubts about its apologetic tendencies).

The broad strategic agenda has also led some to revisit the question of socialist ideology. Some suggest that contesting the politics of state-led "development" in this way offers a basis for reviving socialist momentum by encapsulating decommodified, destratified experiments in grassroots development. But these are still too few and far between in South Africa to offer any real guide.

In practice, no matter who or how many proponents there are of the importance of working "in and against the state" (as it was termed once in Britain) and in progressive organs of civil society, this orientation regularly conflicts with South Africa's never-ending eruption of eclectic progressive activity.

Such activity often amounts either to narrow, corporatist deal-making under present conditions of widespread political confusion, or to an "anarchic" kind of self-activity of the masses that in turn runs the risk of isolation and even repression. The deal-making is characterised by technocrat takeovers; having been party to a fair number of such transactions I can testify to their debilitating effect on movement integrity and also to their unworkability in practice ("deals that don't make any sense," we came to call this line of work).

### Self-help against capital and the state?

At the other extreme, actually existing self-activity of the masses is



generally characterised by a proud populist belief in the ability of people to sort out problems for themselves, by hostility to technocratic solutions, and by a healthy suspicion about the motivations of state managers and the development industry. In this category fit the wave of courageous (though occasionally patronage-related) land invasions, which due to their success, high visibility and threat to the rule of property have – at the best largely of the bourgeois press – rapidly brought “queue-jumping squatters” (as if there existed coherent “queues”) into the category of New South African “other” (recently occupied mainly by “illegal immigrants” from Southern Africa).

But this kind of local militancy offers mixed blessings for the left. On the one hand, self-help rhetoric undergirds, for instance, the extremely impressive National Homeless People’s Federation (and their particularly tough technocrats in the People’s Dialogue NGO). On the other hand, the self-help approach also warms the heart of capital and its intelligentsia, by challenging the rule of property in only the most distant way and by diverting attention from traditional movement demands that the state increase its commitment to solving social problems.

The self-help rhetoric and activism has not prevented the Homeless People’s Federation from raising R9 million from the government for their housing savings fund (by pressuring the late Minister Joe Slovo and his successor). But to illustrate the danger, the group was also glowingly praised in June by a conservative columnist of the ultra-bourgeois *Sunday Independent*; any time neo-liberals feel the urge to cut back state housing commitments, they can dredge up the example of the Federation’s R8,000 self-constructed homes and members’ apparent willingness to live on cheap land (where resistance from neighbouring landowners is also lower) far from commerce or industry.

At the international scale, this kind of conflict is becoming quite important, as avaricious international “aid” agencies turn to the miraculous delivery capacity of NGOs and even community-based organisations. (Their aims are mainly to pave the way for their home countries’ transnational corporations and hence to lower the global social wage in large part through shrinking Third World states and demolishing their already inadequate social policies.)

What’s a self-respecting NGO activist to do? Having won symbolic battles for reform of, for example, even the World Bank – most Bank missions now pay fairly close attention to local “participation” (as well as to good governance, transparency, gender sensitivity, environmental awareness, all disfigured of course by neo-liberal costing principles) – the petty-bourgeoisie who populate NGOs (yours truly included) face the danger of inordinately swelled heads regarding the stature of “people-driven development.”

### Localising global struggle

The question of wealth/income distribution is ultimately one of our most helpful reality checks. And it is here that hundreds of years of human experience shows that “advocacy” around the distribution of a social surplus must ultimately take precedence over the establishment of utopian community experiments in self-rule – though new relations of production/reproduction must always be forged simultaneously.

But we face the harsh reality in so many places across the world of a quarter-century of defeat on the left; perhaps a longish cyclical downturn, perhaps more enduring. Even mildly leftist governments are hard to find, advocacy struggles and campaigning are at an unprecedented low point, revolutionary movements are thoroughly defeated, working-class organisations are divided and confused,

true self-government is nearly non-existent, anti-development struggles are purely defensive, and socialist, feminist, democratic and other liberating ideologies are waning.

Although there are not many optimistic examples in South Africa, the potential remains – in strong working-class organisation – for providing a modicum of countervailing power. This will probably entail some attempts at elaborating the strategic framework outlined above, particularly in light of arguments emerging elsewhere (such as Chiapas) about radicalising civil society.

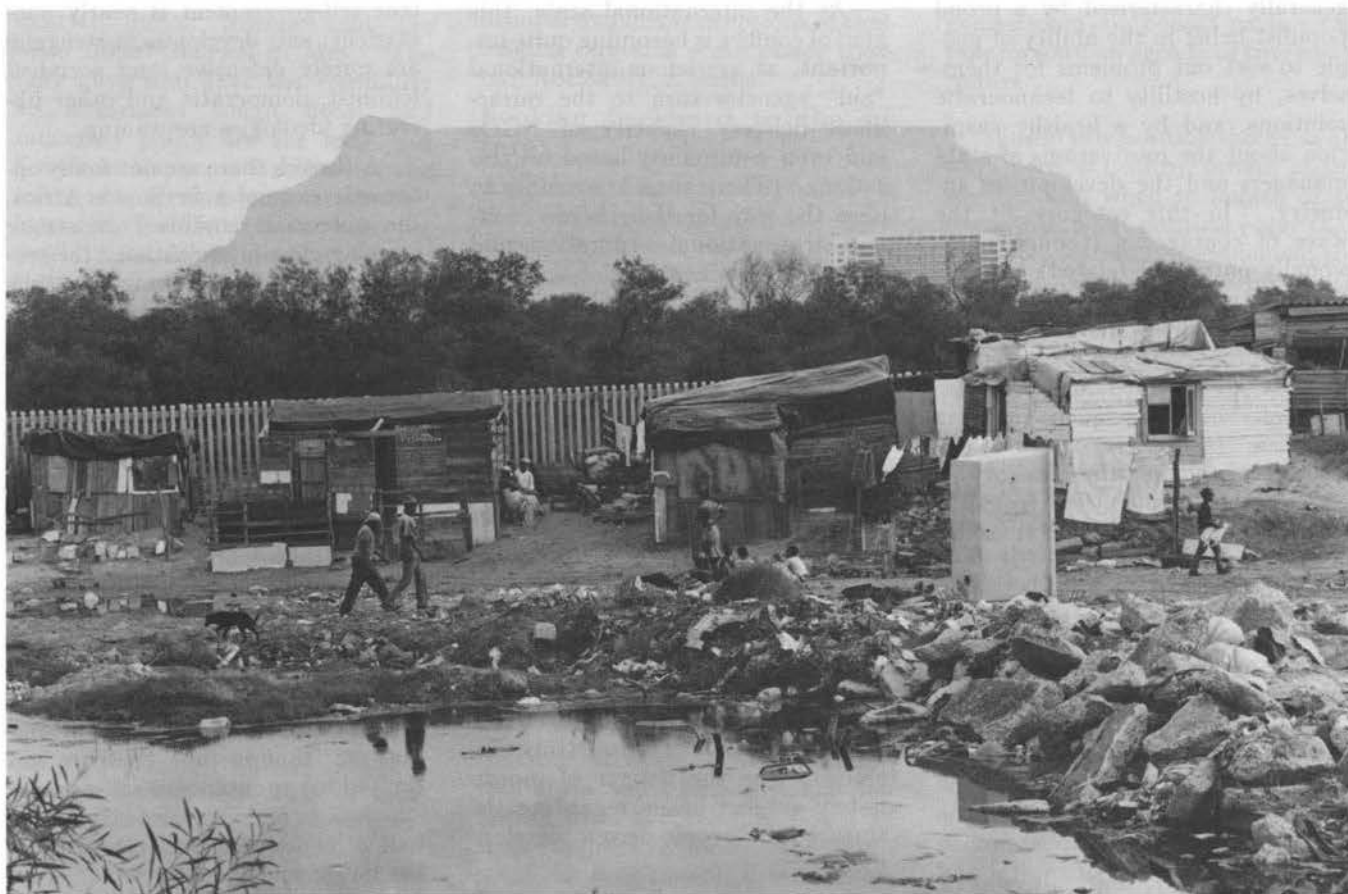
In the more important sphere of daily practice, South African leftists continue searching for the difficult combination of “militant particularism” (in the words of the late British Marxist Raymond Williams) and social struggles against the status quo. These involve alternative means of living, producing, consuming, etc, that include (but are not limited to) spontaneous self-activity – as well as ongoing advocacy on behalf of constituencies’ just stake of the larger social surplus.

If this allows activists to re-discover and celebrate their 1980s and early 1990s philosophical roots, while thinking globally and acting locally, it should not be too long before the rash of myopic, technocratic plans to reform the World Bank and promote environmentally-friendly international Keynesianism give way to more instinctual forms of resistance.

### Globalising local struggle

For it is probably the case – as scholars like Giovanni Arrighi, Terrence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein have argued – that the most serious challenge to globalisation will occur when “popular movements join forces across borders (and continents) to have their respective state officials abrogate those relations of the interstate system through which the pressure is conveyed.”

The hundreds of urban IMF riots against neo-liberalism in the



Eric Miller – Impact Visuals

1980s plus the anti-free trade actions in Chiapas, anti-GATT demonstrations in India and the anti-privatization campaign in Haiti show that massive popular uprisings against globalization are an ongoing feature of political and economic change.

In South Africa, the capacity of democratic social forces to think globally and act locally – and in doing so to locate the vulnerabilities of the international system and develop political strategies accordingly – was conclusively demonstrated by the successful 1980s anti-apartheid sanctions campaign. That capacity did not die; it has been continually enhanced – even if at a low level of activity – by ongoing solidarity labour actions with trade unions in Europe and North America.

In addition to holding firm against World Bank loans, and all that they represent – and there have

been no loans (only brutal policy advice) after two years of ANC rule – there are many other opportunities for South African progressives to take the world stage and reflect upon how the anti-apartheid struggles once endorsed by the international community are entirely consistent with a new attack on globalisation.

The mass organisations of civil society will play a leading role in this. Opposition to globalisation should increasingly emerge from small farmers, civics or primary health clinics which oppose the market-oriented, “cost-recovery”-based land, housing, and health policies that the Bank is already promoting heavily in South Africa.

If Southern Africans and North Americans with experience fighting neo-liberalism are to continue joining hands, it may occur through

finding new common targets – now that Pretoria is ostensibly in friendly hands – at the global scale. Hence, to return to an easy example, the merits of actually shutting down (via defunding) the Bretton Woods Institutions now heavily outweigh reformist arguments, and if northern taxpayers take this up via toughening the “50 Years Is Enough” campaign (for example, at the October meetings of the Bank and IMF in Washington, DC), they will find increasing numbers of southern activists, conscientised by innumerable local struggles against Bank/Fund policies and projects, cheering them on.

A small piece of advocacy remains the contribution to the broader analysis made by progressive intellectuals. With *SAR* continuing to provide a crucial forum, we owe it to our comrades to debate these issues damn hard.

## "Growth, Employment and Redistribution"

What's in it for the masses? If the proposed macroeconomic reforms are adopted, South African government guilefully promises that results will include a one percent decline in the interest rate and a much stronger currency by year-end. There are even predictions of 126,000 new jobs in 1996. By the year 2000, the strategy aims for a six percent annual growth rate and 400,000 job created.

But the reforms chosen to reach these targets overwhelmingly benefit big capital in the short term. Responding graciously, the South African Chamber of Business termed the strategy "a major step in the right direction" and the South African Foundation (a newly-reconstituted collection of the fifty largest firms) lauded the "creative and decisive response which speaks of courage and conviction."

Financial institutions now have permission to double the money they can export from South Africa. There are new tax holidays for manufacturers who increase their investments. Privatisation is squarely on the agenda. Deficit spending – which traditionally boosts employment and services for low-income people – will be cut back dramatically.

### Wages decline

In contrast, government predicts that workers in the private sector will see their wages decline by 0.5% (after inflation) this year. Government even recommends "a less onerous wage schedule for young trainees," which unions may view as the beginning of the controversial "two-tier labour market" recommended by the South African Foundation. And there is little to celebrate in the strategy regarding community development. Many old-style policies – pit latrines instead of toilets (instead of houses), high mast lighting instead of electricity, communal taps instead of access to water on each plot – are hidden within the strategy. Worse, government's hostility to desperately-needed cross-subsidies for recurrent costs – paying for water, sanitation and electricity – appears to be growing.

Other pillars of what was once considered a broader National Growth and Development Strategy – such as social development infrastructure and human resource development – have been reduced to molehills in the new strategy. Ambitious targets regarding redistribution of income have been forgotten.

Yet South Africa has already had three years of "jobless growth." Grand programmes to build houses have been hijacked by hostile banks and hesitant construction firms. Land reform and restitution is proceeding at a snail's pace. Even the best intentions – free primary health care for all, redistribution of educational resources, women's reproductive rights, youth recre-

ation, attention to the needs of disabled people – are being foiled by lack of facilities in the townships and countryside.

Social movements are fully aware of these policy mistakes and implementation disasters. Hence even if the technical assumptions in the strategy turn out to be correct (which many on both the left and right of the economics profession seriously doubt), political ownership of the government's strategy appears skin-deep. Yet unfortunately, even after ANC leaders condemned an earlier version of the macroeconomic strategy as "Thatcherite," the Democratic Movement and other organic grassroots forces – as represented in the RDP Council, for instance – were not consulted about an alternative strategy.

"In the present climate of instability," warns the new document, "a fiscal expansion would precipitate a balance of payments crisis." But government's strategy does not even consider means of taxing imported luxury goods consumed by South Africa's elites, as the Reconstruction and Development Programme had insisted.

This may be because most of the 16 economists who devised the strategy are from institutions such as the Finance Ministry, Development Bank of Southern Africa, World Bank, Reserve Bank and Stellenbosch Bureau of Economic Research. Their free-market ideologies have proven ineffectual or downright oppressive, here and across the Third World.

Yet having won the battle over the strategy, there are still problems for conservative forces in government and business. Because as workers and community residents – and women and disabled people, who are barely mentioned in the strategy – learn more about the government's emerging policies, they will wonder what is in it for them. And they will think about the bargaining power they will have under the strategy's proposed National Social Agreement, and how they might increase this power.

After all, business has shown that it can cajole, threaten and simply go on "investment strike." Even after the lifting of exchange controls – meant to soothe foreign and local investors – capital flight can intensify and the rand can crash, ironically leading business leaders to call for still further liberalisation. Government can pursue what are widely recognised by big business as "sound economic policies" yet foreign direct investment nevertheless stays home, leaving only "hot money" to erratically flood in and out of South Africa.

In short, none of government's pleading to capital seems to do much good. The day the strategy was unveiled, the rand lost five cents against the US dollar.



# Namibia's Wall of Silence

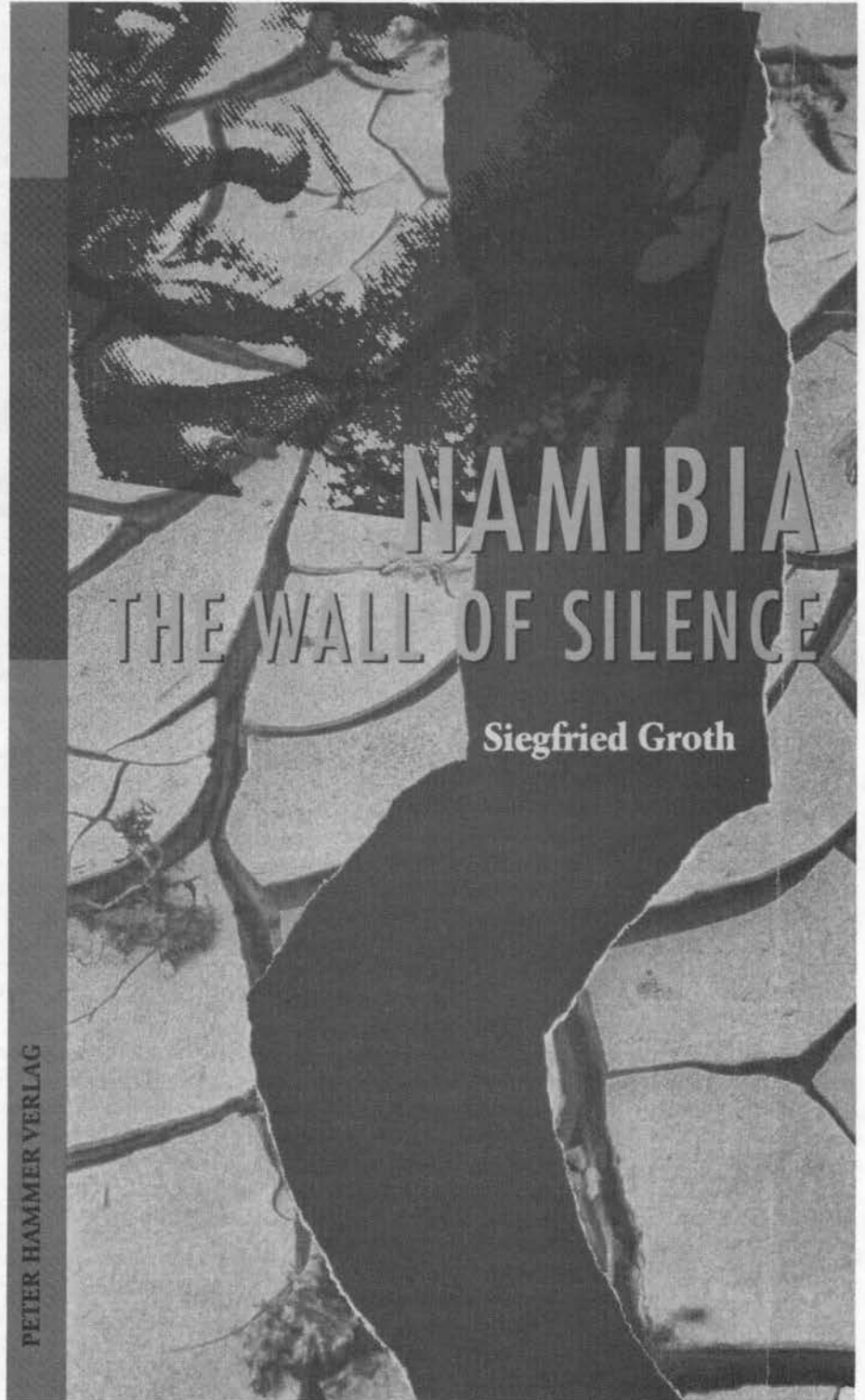
BY LAUREN DOBELL

Lauren Dobell is a doctoral candidate at Oxford University and a student of Namibian politics.

*Namibia: The Wall of Silence*, by Siegfried Groth (Peter Hammer Verlag, Wuppertal, Germany 1995) 211 pages.

Namibia's collegial multi-party parliament, its exemplary national constitution and its regular, peaceful elections are a continuing source of pride to its citizens and of satisfaction to local and international observers. As a measure of the degree to which democratic practice is entrenched, however, a smoothly functioning electoral system is in itself insufficient. To be considered genuinely "consolidated," a democratic polity must have demonstrated itself able to cope with stresses or shocks without sacrificing the basic political freedoms upon which it depends. Such a shock was administered to Namibia's ruling party with the release of Siegfried Groth's book, *Namibia: The Wall of Silence*, earlier this year. Swapo's initial response to the oppositional activity it engendered was not especially encouraging.

At the heart of the crisis is the issue of former "detainees," who allege widespread mistreatment of suspected dissidents during the liberation struggle by Swapo's leadership in exile, and are demanding a full confession and apology



from the perpetrators, possibly through a process modelled after the South African Truth Commission. But the ramifications of their campaign reach well beyond the question of rehabilitation for those accused by their movement of having been spies and traitors, and restitution for the families of those who never returned from the "Swapo dungeons." At stake too is the government's policy of national reconciliation, the past and future role of the once-powerful Council of Churches in Namibia, the composition of the Swapo leadership and, ultimately, the quality of Namibia's democracy itself.

### National reconciliation?

Swapo's policy of national reconciliation, the essential contours of which were determined before independence, differs significantly from the ANC's approach to the same fundamental challenge of putting a nation's ugly and painful past behind it. South Africa's Government of National Unity established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reasoning, in the words of Justice Minister Dullah Omar, that "reconciliation is not simply a question of indemnity or amnesty or letting bygones be bygones. If the wounds of the past are to be healed ... if future violations of human rights are to be avoided, if we are successfully to initiate the building of a human rights culture, disclosure of the truth and its acknowledgment is essential."

As Namibia's ruling party, Swapo chose another route to reconciliation. In the government's view resurrecting the past served no useful purpose. A successful transition, the argument went, required cooperation among former enemies, and delving into past wrongs would only incite a desire for vengeance and distract the nation from the tasks of reconstruction and development. An unspoken but critical subtext were the Swapo leadership's concerns about the skeletons in its

own closet. Having been quietly collecting dust for some years, these now appear set for a good rattling.

The "detainees issue" did make itself felt in Namibia's independence elections. Swapo detainees released in July 1989 formed a political party and united with the vocal Parents' Committee (comprising relatives of detainees or missing persons). Together they captured some of Swapo's support and helped to deny it a two-thirds majority vote. Since then the issue has been largely dormant. Exhortations from the president to observe national reconciliation, the judicious incorporation of many former detainees into the public service, the discrediting of others, fatigue and fear of social ostracism have all contributed to effectively quelling the few subsequent attempts by former detainees to revive the issue. In late 1994 parliament stifled a motion by opposition politician and former detainee Eric Biwa requesting the release of a promised official list of some 2,100 people still unaccounted for so that formal death certificates could be issued to families, permitting guardianship to be established, marriages to take place, and inheritances to be settled. The issue appeared to be effectively squelched. That is, until the long-awaited release of Siegfried Groth's book provided a catalyst for the resurrection of the controversy.

The book was immediately attacked by senior Swapo leaders, including President Sam Nujoma and party Secretary-General Moses Garoeb as "false history," its author as an "enemy of Swapo" (and, by implication, of Namibia). Sponsors of a formal book launch were accused of having declared war on national reconciliation. All the attention risked portraying the book itself as the issue, rather than for what it provided: a lightning rod for serious and legitimate discontent among many Namibians, a bellwether for Swapo's tolerance of criticism and

democratic dissent, and a decisive test for the resilience of the magic wand of national reconciliation.

### The book itself

Turning first, then, to the book and its contentious contents. The author is a German Lutheran pastor whose ties to Namibia date back to the early 1960s, when he was sent by the Rhenisch Mission in Wuppertal to work with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. Subsequently banned from entering Namibia, he ministered, on behalf of the same churches, to Swapo's followers in exile. His account of what he personally witnessed in the Swapo camps, and what others told him about widespread corruption among the leadership and the harassment, imprisonment, torture and disappearances of people branded as dissidents makes for painful reading; the emotional cost to Groth of finally speaking out is very clear.

Crisply described in a foreword as "not history, but stories," Groth's loosely-woven narrative draws mainly on his own memories and diary entries for a deeply personal and anecdotal account of the Swapo crises of the mid-1970s and 1980s. Although he is at pains to situate the movement's paranoia and excesses against a backdrop of a brutal apartheid regime, Groth does little to explain the wider context in which the Namibian liberation struggle was fought, nor the inner dynamics which, from the late 1960s onward, repeatedly threatened to tear the movement apart.

Naturally, it is from the perspective of a devoted Christian, not that of a political historian, that Groth seeks to understand the terrible fates visited on so many of his parishioners-in-exile. The author's faith, however sorely tested it has been, pervades the book; indeed its generous dose of biblical content may, in places, make it tough going for more secular readers. It is

not, however, to these that the book is primarily pitched. The account serves several purposes: as a catharsis for the author, as an attempt to provide some small solace to the victims and their families, as a plea for a confession from the perpetrators, and for some serious soul-searching by those who protected them by their silence. The general reader will find the accounts of individuals' experiences within the movement moving, but fragmentary. Groth calls his account of the spy drama a "body without limbs," but it is in fact the reverse: it is the central narrative thread that is lacking.

Several of the chapters follow a similar pattern, tracing the story of courageous Namibians whose experience of apartheid cruelty at home sent them into exile, where they fell victim to forces they could not comprehend. Groth's own analytical tool – the measuring stick of morality – is ill-suited to the task of explaining actions that were rooted rather in more terrestrial instincts: anti-intellectualism, ethnic rivalry, jealousy, ambition, logistical confusion and political pragmatism, played out within a framework set by regional and international forces. Groth is to some extent captured by the red herring of ideology here: the role of communism in informing the movement's leaders is overplayed, and Marxism is conflated with its Stalinist distortions. At the same time, however, Groth's account reflects the incomprehensibility to the victims of their betrayal by a movement fighting for freedom from a common oppressor. What may appear understandable with the perspective accorded by time and distance from the event, certainly wasn't to those caught up in it.

### Swapo's responsibility

Throughout the account runs the underlying question: were the atrocities and the authoritarianism a product of terrible circumstance

or part of Swapo's fibre? Groth is reluctant to condemn individuals or to pass judgement on the movement. The "securocratic" wing within the Swapo leadership is held directly responsible for the abuses which occurred, but it is the individual and collective complicity of the churches and clerics inside Namibia and abroad which shoulder the brunt of the blame in this account. Like Groth himself, the churches remained silent about what they knew or suspected: a product of a mistaken and terribly damaging solidarity. To break down the "wall of silence" is the challenge Groth throws out with this book. And in this respect it seems he may just succeed.

Ironically, albeit perhaps inevitably, the book remains to some extent complicit in the very "silence" it sets out to break. Groth tells only some of what he knows. He cites few sources, and in quoting his informants appears to be giving the gist rather than the verbatim content of their remarks. Most of the names of the victims are pseudonyms, and only a few of the best-known "securocrats" are named. He does, however, break a longstanding taboo in holding Sam Nujoma, as president, responsible for what was taking place in his organisation, whether or not he was fully apprised of what was happening. Altogether, it is a very partial contribution to the whole truth, as the author humbly acknowledges. His faith allows him to accept the exceptional (the "miraculous" escape of some obvious targets) and to sidestep many important questions, leaving the reader frustrated. Many of the chapters simply trail off: some did this, some did that. Some survived, some didn't. Most seek to find some sort of redemption for Swapo. Groth almost certainly exaggerates the role of Christian belief as a cleavage within the movement. (In another account of life in the camps, Pekka Peltola emphasises trade union membership as

putting Swapo cadres at risk; education and ethnic background were most salient according to the evidence). Namibian political scientist Joe Diescho probably came closest to the truth in a recent interview with *The Namibian*: the majority were simply "people who had the courage to ask [inconvenient] questions."

*The Wall of Silence* has undoubtedly made waves inside Namibia. It is not so much what Groth himself reveals about this history that matters. Very little of what he says is new, and others have contributed more detail, better substantiated, to the collective record [*Editors' note*: see in particular, in this regard, Colin Leys and John S. Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword* (London and Athens Ohio: James Currey and Ohio University Press, 1995), to which Lauren Dobell herself contributes an important chapter.] One is left to wonder why the book has struck such a chord among certain sections of the Namibian population, and elicited such an extravagant response from the top ranks of Swapo.

### The reception

Partly it is a matter of authorship. The Swapo leadership has always been allergic to criticism of any kind, but the closer the source to the centre of power, the less easy it is to dismiss, and the more immoderate the reaction. In contrast to previous accounts of the "crisis of 1976" and the "Swapo spy drama" (Groth doesn't deal with the lesser-known "Kongwa crisis" of the late 1960s), *The Wall of Silence* is, in effect, speaking from within the solidarity fold. Groth was a fellow-traveller, and his defection hurts, although not nearly as much as others would. It is fear of fissures appearing further up that has prompted certain senior Swapo leaders to lash out as they have. The hierarchy of concerns that informed their manoeuvres in the weeks



following the release of the book would appear to read, in descending order, as follows: 1) protecting themselves, 2) preserving the unity of the Swapo leadership's "inner circle," 3) maintaining the loyalty of the broader party membership, 4) assuaging international concerns, and 5) quieting the nation, although insofar as 5) appeared a prerequisite for some of the others, the strategy was not always altogether linear.

And certainly developments suggested that there were reasons for concern (or optimism, depending on the perspective) all along the spectrum. The release of the book in the original German prompted some former detainees to present a petition to the Council of Churches of Namibia, requesting the organization to undertake a booklaunch and to thereby acknowledge the "weighty responsibility" Groth imputes to it for initiating a genuine healing process. The ensuing debate within the CCN executive threatened to split it, with the major Northern churches initially rejecting any part in sponsoring a launch. The CCN eventually determined to hold a conference within the year to discuss the issue more generally. A Breaking the Wall of Silence (BWOS) Committee was then formed, comprising former detainees and their supporters, together with a number of CCN employees. These determined to launch the book under its own auspices, and undertook translations from English into the more widely spoken Afrikaans and Oshivambo, the latter directly addressing Swapo's traditional support base. Certain Swapo leaders' concern grew apace as the weekly meetings of the BWOS swelled in size, and its spokespeople became more outspoken. The President was the first to lash out (and it was highly suggestive to see who followed him). Having apparently never heard the adage "no publicity is bad publicity," he commandeered fifteen minutes of air time on national television to condemn the book. The

next day book stores reported brisk sales and the battle escalated. Letters to the editor flooded into Namibia's newspapers, and passionate editorials flowed out; NBC radio's chat shows were abuzz with calls commending and condemning the efforts to resurrect the detainee issue.

More telling blows were still to land. The major umbrella organization of progressive non-government organizations, NANGOF, and the branch of the national students' organization [(NANSO) still affiliated to Swapo] both declared their support for the proposed CCN conference, which had become emblematic, for both supporters and detractors, of a step towards a Truth Commission. Such public urgings from historical allies for Swapo to "come clean" caused party Secretary General Moses Garoeb to "go ballistic" as the headline in *The Namibian* put it, declaring Swapo and its supporters ready to back to war to defeat those "evil forces" that were threatening peace and stability in Namibia.

Garoeb's outburst concealed a more rational calculation on the part of those within the leadership who have most to fear from full disclosure. These are, in fact, a small minority within Swapo's formerly exiled leaders, who have relied for years on a pact of

secrecy within the leadership as a whole. But there are signs that some of their colleagues are weary of their guilt by association, and that the bonds are eroding. So too, seemingly, is Swapo's control over the party wings, especially its youth league, workers and students. The "old guard" may be in for a rough ride at the forthcoming Swapo Congress, and it's certain that its strong arm tactics are intended to bring the more irreverent elements to heel.

What then, to make of all this? *The Wall of Silence* has helped to unleash forces inside Namibia that give cause simultaneously for optimism and alarm. On the one hand there are exciting signs that "civil society" in Namibia is finding its feet and finding a voice, binding together to create a political space for legitimate criticism and democratic dissent. There are signs too that more radical elements within Swapo may be building up to a much needed shake-up within Swapo's government and party ranks. On the other hand, Namibians have little experience of defying the party which retains so much of its liberation movement glamour, and some of its most powerful leaders have demonstrated that they are prepared to crack down hard on calls for a Namibian Truth Commission. The vexing paradox noted in other transitions to democracy is as true of Namibia as anywhere else: the more important it is to deal with the past, the harder it is to do so.

Near the end of his book Groth recalls meeting Swapo founding member Andimba Toivo ya Toivo at an independence day banquet. Initially reluctant to greet him, Toivo relents, saying "You're not a good friend of Swapo, but I do welcome you to Namibia." Would that all of Swapo's leaders made the crucial distinction between unquestioning support for Swapo and being a loyal friend to Namibia.



**ARTCRAFT / ACTION PRINT**  
**Specialists in Multicolour and Black & White pre-press, printing and finishing**  
 Newsletters ★ magazines ★ brochures  
 Envelopes of all sizes are our forté  
 Business and Personal Stationery  
 ★ ★ ★  
 Desktop output & camerawork services  
 2370 Midland Ave., Unit C-10, Scarborough,  
 Ont. M1S 5C6 (416) 412-0412/Fax 412-0414  
**Call today for estimate and advice!**

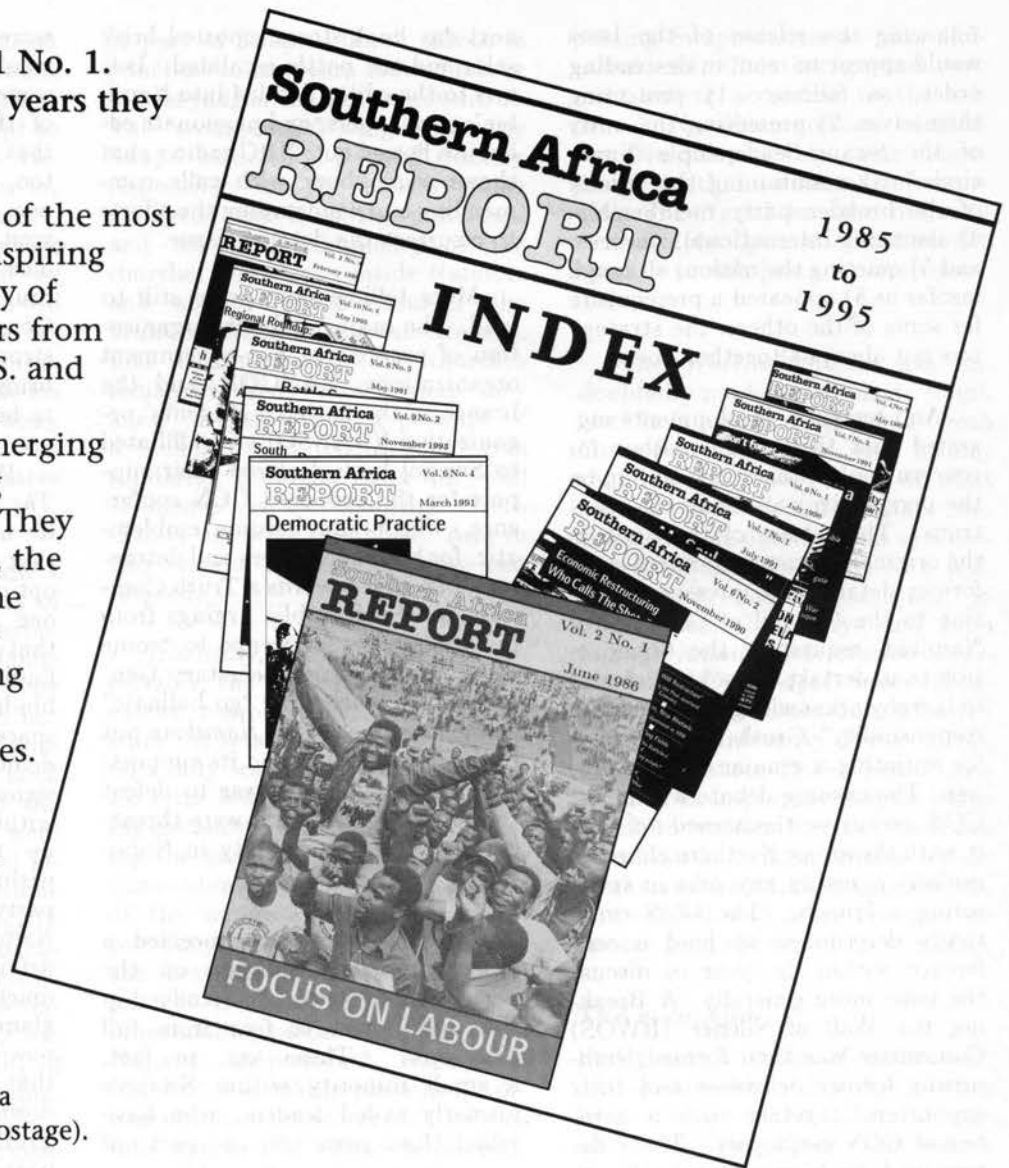
# Southern Africa Report is now indexed!

Vol. 1 No. 1 to Vol. 11 No. 1.  
Ten years – and what years they  
have been!

SAR has covered some of the most dramatic, tragic and inspiring moments in the history of Southern Africa. Writers from Africa, Canada, the U.S. and Europe have described liberation struggles, emerging democracies, changing international policies. They have covered the wars, the peace, the elections, the hopes, the disappointments and the on-going struggles to build just and democratic societies.

Now SAR is indexed –  
by subject, by country  
and by author. Order  
your copy by sending  
us the coupon below.

\$4.00 Cdn.  
\$5.00 Cdn. outside Canada  
(price includes taxes and postage).



---

Return to: Southern Africa Report, 603 ½ Parliament St., Toronto, Ontario M4X 1P9

Name: .....

Address: .....

..... postal code .....

Amount enclosed: .....

Price: \$4.00 Cdn. in Canada, \$5.00 Cdn. outside Canada (includes taxes and postage).

