

# Southern Africa REPORT

20th ANNIVERSARY  
Special Double Issue

Vol. 8 No. 3-4  
Jan.-Feb. 1993

## South Africa 1993

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### Trapped by Past Gestures

LINDA FREEMAN  
ON  
CANADA SOUTH AFRICA  
RELATIONS

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### Spectres from the Camps

TOM LODGE  
ON  
ANC REVELATIONS

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### Regional Diversity: Natal and the Eastern Cape

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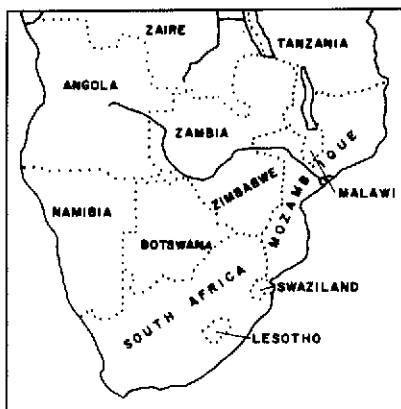


price: \$3.50

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Jan.-Feb. 1993

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## Southern Africa REPORT

is produced 5 times a year by a volunteer collective of the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC)

427 Bloor St. W.  
Toronto, M5S 1X7  
Tel. (416) 967-5562

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

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Annual TCLSAC membership and Southern Africa Report subscription rates are as follows:

### SUBSCRIPTION:

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

### MEMBERSHIP: (includes subscription)

Regular . . . . . \$35.00  
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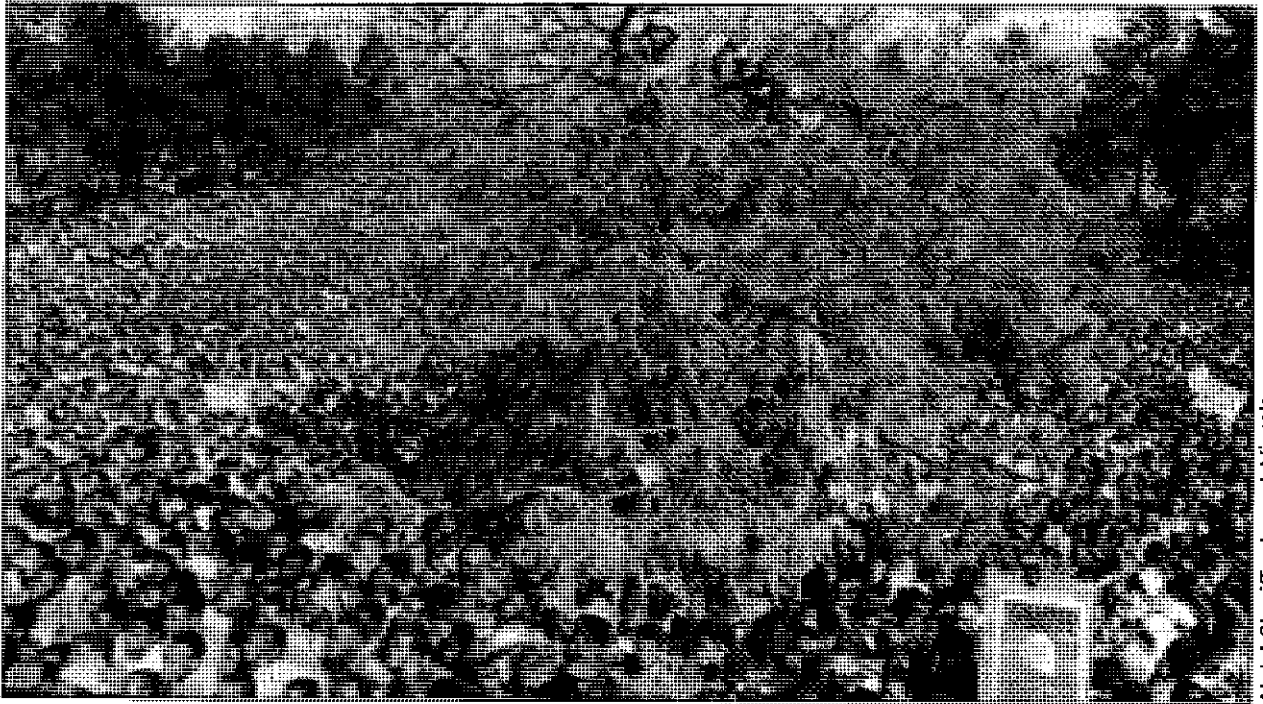
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## Twenty Years

Twenty years ago a group of us formed TCLPAC - the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal's African Colonies (later TCLSAC - the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa). Various publications sponsored by the committee over the years - ranging from books steeped in "analytical rigour," through pamphlets, newsletters and information bulletins, to virtually every form of agitational ephemera - culminated, some eight years ago, in the launching of *Southern Africa Report*. Now, on the occasion of the parent committee's twentieth anniversary, *SAR* returns the compliment, in the form of this special double-issue to mark TCLSAC's twentieth anniversary.

We've come, however, neither to bury TCLSAC nor even, in any very marked way, to praise it. Praise? Rather than embrace the dubious undertaking of self-congratulation (or even the often all

too arch business of "self-criticism") we asked Richard Swift - a long-time activist on the Toronto scene and currently an editor of the *New Internationalist* - to profile the committee's history for us instead. Swift - "who is not now and never has been a member of TCLSAC" - challenged the editorial working group with some observations that hit uncomfortably close to home and triggered fascinating debates among us regarding his more controversial judgements. But we were pleased, in the end, to have a piece that spoke so eloquently beyond the immediacy of local circumstance to introduce tough questions about the strengths and weaknesses of solidarity work, past, present and future.

... and future? To repeat, we have no more intention of burying TCLSAC than of praising it. As will be apparent from recent numbers of this magazine, the committee has been seeking fresh ways - the establishment of a novel "South-

South-North network" is an example - to redefine its activities so as to make them speak more directly to the challenges that right now confront both southern Africans and those Canadians who wish to work in solidarity with them. Indeed, as we have argued previously (notably in our March, 1992, issue on "The New Terms of Solidarity"), we feel that the situation may actually be even more propitious than it was during the hey-day of the anti-apartheid movement for forging lasting links between Canadians and southern Africans.

There is, for example, a much sharper sense of a common vulnerability to the arbitrary workings of the international market-place at both ends, south and north, of the solidarity equation, as well as a growing mutual awareness of the complexities implied in the worldwide debate about "democratization" and empowerment. We might

even suggest that, whatever the other merits of his article, Swift is guilty in his concluding paragraphs of underestimating the potential saliency, the concrete and living reality, of such shared solidarity concerns. We look forward to a lively correspondence on such questions, in any case. Here we will merely draw readers' attention to a second related article in the present issue, one written by Bob Jeffcott of the Toronto-based Latin American Working Group. Jeffcott sketches, helpfully, the debates among Latin America-focussed support activists regarding the "new terms of solidarity" that might be relevant to redefining their own work in a post-Cold War epoch of unrestrained, capitalist-sponsored globalization. One struggle, many fronts? Certainly, in underscoring many parallels between LAWG's rethinking of its mandate and our own concerns, Jeffcott reinforces our sense as to how challenging – and yet how promising – the road ahead for solidarity work is likely to be.

\* \* \*

So, members, don't get weary. Addressing a meeting of anti-apartheid activists several years ago in Washington, a prominent figure in the U. S. solidarity network looked wistfully around the crowded room and noted the host of familiar faces he saw. "I know many of you have been involved in this struggle a long time," he said, "and you're probably getting a bit frustrated and a bit tired. So I want you to do something for me. Please, everybody, stand up from your seats." The group, quizzically, struggled to its feet. "Now," he instructed, "everybody take a deep breath." As, a second later, we all exhaled, he interjected good-humoredly: "That's all the rest you're going to get!"

So much, then, for TCLSAC's twentieth anniversary: Swift's article – and an accompanying pictorial essay, designed to capture something of both the valour and the horror of the past twenty years of southern African history – is all the rest

we're going to get. Other articles in this issue stand on more familiar ground – even if there are rather more of them in this double issue than usual. Most noteworthy, perhaps, is Linda Freeman's survey of Canadian policy towards southern Africa – an annual feature in these pages since *SAR*'s inception and in itself reason enough, some readers tell us, to hold onto a complete set of back issues. Freeman once again probes beneath the rhetoric – and the pregnant silences – emanating from Ottawa and what she reveals is no prettier a picture than in previous years. Our government, she suggests, is "trapped by past gestures" in a more progressive policy stance than it feels comfortable with and is eagerly looking for a way out of it.

Of course, even the most casual reader of the daily newspapers might, up to a point, grasp as much. Consider the bald juxtaposition, on successive days, of stories in many Canadian papers noting – day one – Mulroney's refusal to meet Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu and – day two – his amiable exchange (complete with photo opportunity) with the reprehensible Chief Gatsha Buthelezi (see p. 6, below). But Freeman – reporting on developments on numerous policy fronts – suggests many other good reasons for concerned Canadians to keep the pressure on our own government during the difficult transition process to a democratic future in South Africa.

Fortunately, the present issue also provides a wealth of material for the reader eager to keep up with the processes at work inside South Africa itself – not least a timely reminder from Gerry Maré regarding Buthelezi's own machinations in Kwazulu, where he continues his attempt to reduce the struggle for democratic advance in South Africa to a mere turf war. In addition, however, Janet Cherry brings more promising news from the Eastern Cape regarding political developments there, Tom Lodge reports

on recent attempts by the ANC to come to terms with its own troubled past, Karl von Holdt concludes his reflections on the emergence, within the working class movement, of the project of "strategic unionism," and David MacDonald scrutinizes several books that seek to place environmental concerns more centrally on the agenda of a new South Africa. We are fortunate, too, to have a uniquely revealing African perspective on South Africa, in the form of an account by Tanzanian political scientist, Mohamed Halfani, of his recent trip as part of a Canadian-based study-team investigating urban issues in that country.

And more besides. Ann Griffin, Deputy Executive Director of the Washington-based TransAfrica, reflects on the challenges – and the opportunities – confronting the new Clinton administration as it seeks to define a southern African policy of its own; she launches what we hope will be a fresh series of articles on region-relevant developments in the U. S. by various observer/activists there. And Victoria Brittain reports on her first hand investigation of the recent Angolan election and its immediate aftermath, focussing on the way in which outside interests (South Africa, in particular) are arbitrarily moving the goalposts – from the requirement of democratic elections to the requirement of power sharing – in the continuing attempt to manipulate developments in that country. As she indicates, this is merely one further indication that people throughout the southern Africa region remain hostage to the as yet unrealized transition to a more democratic dispensation inside South Africa itself. On such regional fronts, too, there is clearly solidarity work that cries out to be done.

Our twentieth anniversary issue, then. Enjoy! – or if that doesn't strike you as being quite the right injunction to spring from an issue as full as this one is of sobering materials, try: get busy. We will be. You'd better reserve your copy of our thirtieth anniversary issue now!

# Trapped by Past Gestures: Canada & South Africa 1992

BY LINDA FREEMAN

*Carleton University professor Linda Freeman, activist and writer, is SAR's Ottawa correspondent.*

If it is truly darkest before the dawn, the experience of South Africa in the last year may still offer hope. However, in the year of Boipatong, Bisho and the descent into virtual civil war, it is difficult to be optimistic. With the derailing of constitutional negotiations and the erratic approach taken by the white government, movement forward has been on hold. While the ANC's mass action campaign promised the black majority some leverage, victories have been hard to consolidate, and communities continue to be torn apart by violence.

There is a glimpse of promise that behind-the-scenes negotiations, combined with the ANC's recent willingness to share power for a period of five to ten years, could deliver some kind of settlement at the next face to face talks. However, the experience so far has been that each time the white minority has come to the point of a resolution, it has either asked for more or retreated rather than accede to democratic rule. At this point, the old is dead and the new is not yet born.

For Canada and the larger international community, therefore, it has been a strange year, full of unexpected eddies and undertows. Poised to lift sanctions, wildly enthusiastic about a white referendum that promised simply that South Africa would not return to apartheid, the momentum has ground to a halt. The stagnant nature of the South African economy, hard hit by the current stalemate, has given

parts of the Canadian private sector pause. Other interests have agitated strenuously for the resumption of full economic relations and greater support for President F.W. de Klerk.

## A studied softening of sanctions

Indeed, until the constitutional discussions in CODESA II fell apart, there was every sign that the Canadian government was simply waiting for a propitious moment to end all commercial sanctions. With the end of people's sanctions, a group of Liberal and Conservative MPs had visited South Africa in March at the expense of the South African government, a practice that Mulroney had expressly forbidden at the height of the sanctions campaign in the mid-1980s.

More significantly, in early January the Canadian government had surreptitiously lifted its ban on exports of strategic goods with a potential dual civilian and military use. In contrast to Mulroney's high profile declarations of support for sanctions in 1985 and 1986 at the United Nations and in the Commonwealth, the government simply sent out a circular (#59 of 9 January 1992) notifying Canadian exporters that certain strategic goods – civilian aircraft (including helicopters), electronic and telecommunications equipment, data processing equipment, software and four wheel vehicles – could now be sold to South Africa, provided the end user is not the South African security forces.

Neither the Canadian Exporters Association, the principal lobby group for these changes, nor the ANC representative in Canada had been informed of this decision. Moreover, the day before the circular was sent, Mulroney wrote to

an anti-apartheid group in Montreal, assuring them that "... nous croyons fermement que des sanctions internationales demeurent indispensables. Nous avons propos que la pression exercée soit maintenue tout au long de processus de négociations jusqu'à ce que soit adoptée une nouvelle constitution." However, when the news broke at the end of January, Mulroney insisted that "what we are doing is fully supported by all members of the Commonwealth." External Affairs added that Canada was just bringing its policies "into line" with other Commonwealth countries.

In fact the government was taking advantage of the softening of conditions for lifting trade and investment sanctions initiated by Canadian diplomats themselves. (SAR, January 1992) Instead of requiring "progress on constitutional reform such as the establishment of an interim government (or) a constituent assembly," the 1991 Commonwealth heads of government conference in Harare had agreed that sanctions could now be lifted "when appropriate transitional mechanisms had been agreed in South Africa which would enable all the parties to participate fully and effectively in negotiations." Having been instrumental in drafting this policy, the Canadian government was now in a position to make full use of it.

South Africa's Foreign Minister Pik Botha welcomed the move as an important step in the normalization of relations between the two countries. At the same time, the ANC representative in Canada, Victor Moche, pointed out that there was no effective way to monitor the end use of these strategic goods. He felt the lifting of these sanctions had

been premature, taking pressure off the de Klerk administration before significant progress had been made.

**The Commonwealth tie**

Following the South African referendum in March, however, Mulroney hinted that Canada intended to go even further. In response to pressure from backbench Tory MPs to lift sanctions and to reopen a trade consular office, Mulroney said that the government would, "in co-operation with our Commonwealth partners, seek to send a further signal of confidence to underline the tremendous contribution and leadership shown by de Klerk ..." Secretary of State for External Affairs Barbara McDougall explained that de Klerk needed "tangible support," not just congratulations - "the time is certainly coming very soon when we will see the lifting of sanctions."

However, after consultations with Canada's Commonwealth partners, the euphoria evaporated, and Canadian policy came down to earth with a thud. What the referendum had done, McDougall said, was to "give de Klerk the mandate to increase the momentum. It doesn't give blacks full democracy." In Cape Town in April she spelled out the Commonwealth position: "The interim government doesn't have to be in place. It is agreement on the arrangement that is really the critical point for Commonwealth countries."

As Chair of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Committee on Southern Africa, Canada was not prepared to break rank with its Commonwealth allies. Ironically, the Committee had been formed initially as part of Joe Clark's attempt to prevent additional Commonwealth sanctions at the Vancouver Commonwealth conference in 1987. Now, much to the chagrin of Canadian officials, they were unable to join other Western countries in pursuing full economic relations. "Far from jumping the gun," Canada's Ambassador to South Africa Chris Westdal complained in April, "we're behind everyone else."

Accordingly, the signal of support for de Klerk was reduced to a visit by McDougall to South Africa in April. While Joe Clark had made a quick trip in 1987, McDougall was paying the first official visit by a Canadian minister to South Africa in three decades. Although she did not respond to pressure from de Klerk to lift sanctions (heightened at the time by the EEC's decision to lift its oil embargo), she made no secret of her distaste for them. Sanctions were "a crude mechanism," she said, which had enormous economic and social costs. She felt that "now (was the) time to turn the page and get on with the challenges of a new South Africa." She had "seen that the need for economic development to go along with political development is urgent." Clearly the groundwork was again being laid for the lifting of sanctions.

While McDougall may have been positioning Canada for a resumption of full economic relations, her approach was premised on the belief that constitutional negotiations would go forward. When they were suspended in May and abandoned in June following the Boipatong massacre, Canada's policy also was left in limbo. Ironically, the

Commonwealth-made policy of sustaining sanctions, which had so irked federal government officials and the private sector, turned out to be the prudent choice.

Nevertheless, as South Africa spiralled into a full-blown civil war, the Canadian leadership and press found it difficult to abandon its infatuation with de Klerk. (Besides the fulsome tributes during the referendum, on her visit McDougall found de Klerk "engaging, knowledgeable ... realistic ... and determined.") She renewed an official invitation to him to visit Canada.

At the same time, the attitude to the ANC was noticeably cooler than it had been two years earlier on Mandela's celebrated visit to Canada. In South Africa, McDougall told representatives of the ANC that "to reassure the West and other nations," they must show that they have "truly and completely rejected Communism," reviving memories of the lectures which Mulroney and Clark gave Oliver Tambo on this subject in Canada in 1987. McDougall also sidestepped Mandela's plea for support for simple majority rule, stating that "Every state must find its own path to freedom." Democracy was the goal, she said.



Dave Hartman

*Protest in Windsor, Ontario against S.A. ambassador meeting, October 92*

What shape it would take was up to South Africans.

While McDougall was evasive, sections of the Canadian press made no secret of their support for protection of white minority interests. As the *Globe and Mail* put it (21 December 1991), "It is far from unreasonable for the white minority to seek measures beyond an independent judiciary and a bill of rights, safeguards with a poor record of success in Africa." Following the referendum and even after the Bisho massacre, the *Globe* (18 March and 9 September 1992) continued to put the case for "the group rights of the white minority." In the same camp, the far right *Toronto Sun* (24 February) dismissed the ANC's call for universal franchise, stating that "to do so now would guarantee a horrible civil war in which both black and white would be consumed."

To be fair, not all the press in Canada was quite so ready to dispense with the fundamentals of a democratic settlement in favour of white interests. The *Edmonton Journal* (8 July), for one, noted that "the impasse has come down to this: President F.W. de Klerk is not willing to accept the principle of majority rule in a parliament representing all South Africans," that he wanted "some sort of guarantee for white power, a white veto or enhanced white representation." After the Bisho massacre *Le Soleil* stated simply (9 September), "La minorité blanche doit comprendre que la démocratie demande plus que la fin des lois racistes. Elle exige le respect de la liberté et de ses conditions d'exercice."

While the press was willing to argue out the merits of the case, McDougall's hands-off position on the principle of majority rule could arguably have been defended as non-interference at a sensitive moment in a foreign country's history. However, when added to her stance on the issue of violence, these views suggest a willingness to give the de Klerk government the

benefit of the doubt on most issues, to allow him to be both reformer and aggressive protagonist of white minority power at the same time.

On a number of occasions, McDougall ignored compelling evidence from credible sources which have found that security forces linked to the state in South Africa have orchestrated, aided, and participated in the violence. Studies by Amnesty International, the International Committee of Jurists (whose Vice President is Canadian Supreme Court Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé) and the Human Rights Commission have evidence of collusion between state security forces and Inkatha, and have documented the leading role of Inkatha in initiating cycles of violence. Ominously, latest reports show further co-ordination in training and operations between Inkatha and Renamo, the organization which, with South African backing, has virtually destroyed Mozambique.

While there have been counter assertions apportioning blame equally between all parties (the Goldstone Commission and a recent study of the South African Institute of Race Relations), the origins of these reports and their conclusions are suspect. The Goldstone Commission, appointed by the state after the Boipatong massacre, has had neither the independence nor the access to the black community of the other studies. The second study originates in an institution whose leading individuals, John Kane Berman and Helen Suzman, have a history of partiality to Inkatha and its leader Gatsha Buthelezi and hostility to the ANC.

At the same time, there is no question that groups in the ANC as well as Inkatha have been caught up in a spiral of 'tit for tat' violence. The current dynamic operates in a context which has deep historical roots and is, at one and the same time, structural and political. But the key point is the state's inability or refusal to deal with a situation

which threatens the social fabric of the entire country. By definition, the state has the monopoly of force to clean up the situation and seems to be unwilling to act. As the Amnesty report put it, "As long as the agents of fear and repression believe they can kidnap, torture and murder without fear of discovery or punishment, the cycle of violence will never be broken."

What then was Canada's official response to the increased intensity of violence? On her return home from South Africa, McDougall took the simple way out. She insisted that everybody was responsible both for the violence and for ending it. While after the Boipatong massacre Mandela stated that, "I can no longer explain to our people why we want to talk to a regime that is murdering our people," McDougall said "People have to stop blaming each other and sit down together and look at new kinds of solutions."

It was not until the Bisho massacre in September when South African security forces had been on the spot as advisers to the Ciskei military that McDougall was prepared to look at the obligations of the South African state. "Although all parties in South Africa share responsibility for the continuing political violence," she said, "the primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order rests with the Government of South Africa." After a year of grotesque violence, this statement has been a long time coming.

Yet the Canadian government still seemed reluctant to take the full measure of Inkatha and its leader Gatsha Buthelezi. While Buthelezi has emphasized his position as the leader of the Zulu nation, his role in constitutional negotiations has been primarily that of a spoiler, literally killing his way to the table and threatening secession if his demands are not met. In the international arena, Buthelezi's reputation and profile have been sustained by forces opposed to the ANC, still hoping he will emerge as the black leader of



a post independence South Africa. Yet in South Africa, a series of public opinion polls suggests, that he has little more than 1 to 2% of support nationally while the ANC gets about 65%.

So what are we to make of the fact that when Buthelezi appeared in Canada on a private visit in November, he was invited to meet both Mulroney and McDougall at short notice? Startlingly, in the days immediately preceding his session with Buthelezi Mulroney could not find time to meet with the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Guatemalan human rights activist, Rigoberta Menchu. True, their message to him was reported as being merely schoolmarmish and redundant, Mulroney and McDougall telling Buthelezi that it was time for the resumption of constitutional negotiations and for "positive gestures" to end the violence rather than "finger pointing" and inflammatory language. Curious, though, that McDougall added: "We're not getting in the middle of battles between Mr. Mandela and Chief Buthelezi for stature." Given the difference between 65% and 2%, this position is extremely generous to Chief Buthelezi.

By contrast, the Canadian press and opposition MPs in the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade lannched a challenge to Buthelezi's motives and credentials. Their aggressive questioning subverted his attempt to present himself as a man of peace. In the end, Buthelezi was reduced to a temper tantrum: "I really hate some of you Canadians," he said, for "pontificating" and "talking glibly" about violence.

Generally, the Canadian press has been mixed about the role of Inkatha and the South African state in perpetrating violence. An editorial in the *Vancouver Sun* (23 June) stated that "The question now is not whether Mr. Mandela can rekindle the spirit of compromise.

The Globe and Mail, Wednesday, November 18, 1992



**CONSTITUTION CHAT** — Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi discussed efforts to reform South Africa's constitution with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in Ottawa yesterday.  
*(JOHN HRYNIUK/REUTERS)*

*(Above) Mulroney met with Buthelezi in Ottawa on 17 November 1992. However, several days earlier, Mulroney refused a meeting with 1992 Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu (right) because his schedule was filled.*



It is whether President de Klerk can convince black South Africa that he has control of his security forces and that those forces will act to protect all South Africans, white or black, members of the ANC or Inkatha. If he fails, the world community should be just as quick to push South Africa back into the cold." At the other extreme, *The Citizen* insisted (5 August) that de Klerk was "as sincere a reformer as the white community is likely to produce; if the ANC cannot talk with him, they cannot talk with any white leader."

#### Getting ready for business

The preference for de Klerk and Buthelezi over Mandela in some sectors of civil society in Canada has extended beyond the press to the private sector. Along with much of international capital, it has decided that sanctions are passé. At the same time, any breezy optimism about South Africa's present climate for business has been deflected by the turbulent events of the year.

A South African Chamber of Commerce was formed in Montreal to position the Canadian private sector to take full advantage of new opportunities opened up by the favourable referendum result. Headed by Alain Perez, until recently President of SNC-Lavalin, the Chamber's Board includes representatives from the Banque National de Paris (Canada), Canada Post Corporation, Fednav Group, De Kuyper and Systèmes Stabiue. As Quebec has been the second largest purchaser of South African imports after Ontario in the 1990s (42% of Canada's total imports), there is keen interest in the resumption of economic relations.

Indeed, there is a predisposition to carry on as if government's sanctions had already ended and a resolution achieved in South Africa. While its American associate Fluor Corp. is still harred from business with South Africa, SNC has just become involved in a \$3 billion project to build one of the largest

Elaine Brière

aluminum smelters ever conceived for Alusaf in Richards Bay. Alusaf is a consortium whose partners include the South African mining company, Gencor Ltd., and a South African government agency, the Industrial Development Corporation. Faced with a downturn in engineering work in Canada and a decline in profits, SNC is delighted to use its experience to earn a share of the project's \$200 million in fees.

In the past four years, Friedberg Mercantile Group in Toronto also sold about \$5 million worth of bonds issued by South Africa's Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM), for a handsome return of about 19%. In terms of its sanctions policy, the federal government had asked that financial relations not be undertaken with South Africa until agreement was reached on the text of a new constitution. In this case federal officials complained, but Friedberg argued that the bonds were not new issues nor were they loans. Friedberg purchases the bonds from dealers in London who buy them directly from South Africa. Proceeds from the initial purchase go to South African interests, while proceeds from sales on the secondary market do not. External Affairs said whether Friedberg bought the bonds directly from South Africa or from middlemen was immaterial and that this contravened the spirit of sanctions.

However, as in more celebrated cases in the past, notably the Bank of Nova Scotia's offer of a \$600 million loan to a subsidiary of South Africa's transnational giant Anglo American (SAR December 1989), the voluntary nature of financial sanctions means that Canadian companies in this sector can ignore the government with impunity. The only deterrent has been the understanding that any investment firm that participates in underwriting South African debt will be removed from the list of those eligible to sell federal government issues. As Friedberg doesn't sell such issues, it was free to do whatever it wanted.

Canadians are also moving back into direct equity investments in South Africa before the conditions for lifting sanctions on trade and investment have been met. In March, a Toronto company, Dundee Bancorp purchased a 25% interest in Johannesburg-based Knights Gold Mining for \$US 12.9 million, thus single-handedly more than doubling total Canadian direct investment in South Africa, decimated by years of disinvestment. The Canadian sanctions against new investment are voluntary and this case slipped the attention of federal officials.

However, the private sector's eagerness to resume full economic relations with South Africa has been tempered by the events of the last year. In June a few days after the Boipatong massacre, the law firm Goodman and Goodman held a conference in Toronto to discuss Canada's trade opportunities with South Africa. About 300 Canadians attended along with Pretoria's deputy trade minister, representatives of the private sector in South Africa and senior ANC officials.

In the process, the contradictions within South Africa quickly surfaced. South African government officials tried to promote Canadian investment in South Africa while ANC officials said that, in the current conjuncture, investment guarantees were simply not possible. A South African businessman in the audience then asked why any Canadian would invest in the country when the South African private sector did not trust either the govern-

ment or the ANC. For Canadian businessmen, the message was down beat. A Pizza Pizza executive said "I came here with the hope of being seduced which I have not been."

Against these currents of opinion in Canadian civil society which toy with or actively move forward to closer relations with South Africa, broader public opinion is more uncompromising. A Gallup poll in September found that 71% of Canadians felt that the federal government should not slacken the pressure on Pretoria and 38% felt the government should actually apply more pressure!

\* \* \*

The year in Canada's relations with South Africa has thus been full of ironies. While the polls suggest strong public support for continued firm pressure on Pretoria, the state had intended to move closer to de Klerk. However, events have conspired against this happening - the Commouwealth association and the successive massacres and the evident failure of the South African state to rein in its security forces.

Thus a year which started with a firm plan to drop sanctions has ended with a reluctant reaffirmation of the Commonwealth and a watching brief. In short, the Canadian government has been hoist on its own petard. Having milked the role of leadership in the Commonwealth, it is now having to stay the course rather than defect, as is its inclination, to join its Western allies.

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# TCL'd Pink: 20 Years of Solidarity

BY RICHARD SWIFT

*Richard Swift, a long-time activist on the Toronto scene and currently an editor of the New Internationalist, is not now and never has been a member of TCLSAC.*

TCLPAC - aka "tickle-pack" - always brought to mind an obscure medical condition rather than the name of a solidarity group. My sharpest memories of the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal's African Colonies (now the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa) date from the early 1970s. These were different times when clarity about the causes of and cures for the world's ills seemed a lot easier to achieve.

The Third World had stepped onto the global stage and we who championed its cause thought that the triumph of better alternatives to the neo-colonial status quo were simply a matter of time. This was certainly the case for the struggle in Southern Africa. South Africa's apartheid system was akin to 19th century slavery organized on a national scale. And Portuguese colonialism seemed a brutal anachronism, its racist justifications trans-

parent in an era where more subtle forms of domination were the order of the day.

The two taken together should have been an international cause celebre because they were such obvious and blatant violations of democratic values no matter where they resided on the political spectrum.

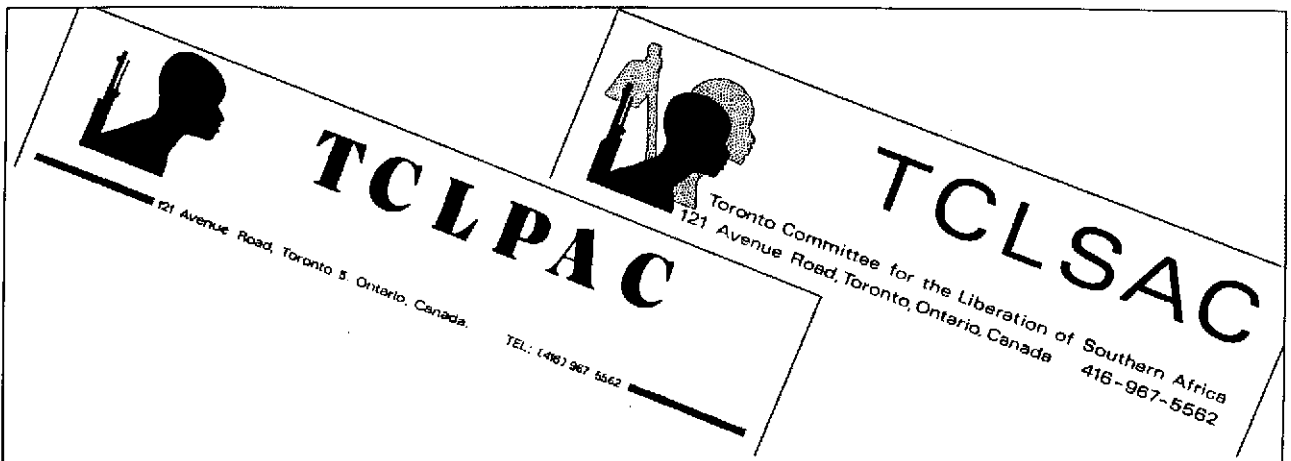
But like many self-evident affronts to liberal values (at least on this side of the Iron Curtain), it took radicals to initiate something more effective than the usual invisible diplomacy and the odd bit of journalistic headshaking. So it was that the little band of rumpiled academics and various other old Africa hands came together to form TCLPAC twenty years ago.

I still have a vivid memory of then-staff person Mike Carr wandering from place to place with a portable TCLPAC book table perpetually strapped to his back. There were newsletters, educational events, speaking tours, tiny demonstrations and a plethora of political campaigns to unmask the complicity of corporate and official Canada. It was all done, of course, for radical, rather than liberal, reasons. Many of those who formed TCLPAC

had experienced first-hand the disappointments of African decolonization. They saw in the liberation movements in the southern part of the continent (particularly Mozambique's FRELIMO) the hope for a new beginning.

Not for them tepid neo-colonialism or a normalized South Africa with a docile black population using its votes to prop up the capitalist status quo. The vision instead imagined a mix of popular empowerment spicing up a program of socialist planning to meet people's basic needs. Ideas about new democratic forms and regenerated African traditions sat a bit uneasily perhaps with more traditional notions about what non-Stalinist state socialism could accomplish.

In Toronto (and to some extent I think nationally), TCLPAC played a critical role in providing thoughtful leadership in anti-apartheid struggles. For me at least they held the franchise for this kind of work. They avoided the twin pitfalls of the mindless cheerleading and the superficial 'anti-imperialism' of the sectarian left, yet they didn't fall into the liberal hypocrisy (which overlooked our stake in the global structures un-



TCLPAC and TCLSAC letterheads. No logo appears on TCLSAC letterhead since 1984.



TCLSAC

*Cinema of Solidarity was a weekly Sunday evening meeting event for the Toronto left in 1973*

derpinning institutional racism) of mainstream criticism of apartheid and Portuguese colonialism.

### **Early years of TCLSAC**

When I was asked to do a critical appreciation of twenty years of TCLSAC, my thoughts naturally shifted back to this early period when the Toronto Left (or at least what we then called the independent Left) formed a much more tightly knit and homogeneous community than we do today.

These were the days of the Cinema of Solidarity every Sunday night at the Medical Sciences auditorium at the University of Toronto. This event, initiated by TCLSAC, allowed for groups to share a common analysis about struggles from different parts of the Third World and their Canadian connections.

It is hard to remember sometimes that at the height of the Cold War social transformation or even simple calls for democratization and human rights in the Third World were viewed with suspicion. Anti-apartheid sentiment was far from respectable back then and TCLSAC

had to withstand corporate spies and even physical assaults by fascist thugs.

Yet, ironically, it was easier for the organization to support staff and get financial resources in those days than in the 1980s when anti-apartheid sentiment became a liberal moral crusade. Then, every church, learner centre and NGO developed their own anti-apartheid activities and no longer looked to groups like TCLSAC to do the work. This was an era referred to by old TCLSAC hands as 'the age of NGOs' when flights to Ottawa and quasi-governmental consultations were the order of the day.

### **No longer a lonely cause**

TCLSAC has played a crucial part in getting a sometimes reluctant NGO community to take seriously the struggle for liberation in Southern Africa. TCLSAC members found themselves participating in mass rallies and rock concerts celebrating what had short years before been a lonely cause. This phase probably peaked with the release of Nelson

Mandela and his officially sponsored trip to Canada.

Yet somehow success in this era was always defined from above and reduced to a simple morality play that never really came to grips with the nature of racial capitalism. Everyone was against apartheid yet no-one quite knew what that meant. Inevitably the complexity of the social situation reasserted itself in a campaign of vicious assaults against the mass movement in South Africa. And when it did, there was little popular understanding to sustain the good guys/bad guys version of instant anti-apartheid. And the optimistic fantasies for a pure development alternative shifted from Southern Africa to Nicaragua and Central America. When they did, they carried with them a good deal of NGO interest and funding.

It is telling that I have lost intimate connection with TCLSAC, a comment on the way the Left has both grown and fragmented in Toronto. Changed too. Today it reflects the city with its growth of activism by people of colour and

a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. These new activists have chosen by and large to set up their own organizations and define their own issues – be they local or global. Like many other organizations from that time, TCLSAC, while certainly not unaware of these changes, remains largely white and Anglo-Saxon. One former TCLSAC staff person recalls her frustration that the group failed to attract any significant support from the new black activism in the city.

### TCLSAC's critical support

But thumbing through the old issues of *Southern African Report* in order to catch myself up, I found it reflected the same courage in facing difficult political problems that marked earlier phases of TCLSAC. If there is a TCLSAC "line," it is this attempt to grapple with the thorny issues of solidarity politics. When and how to be critical of the organizations and governments you support. How to make alliances with those from whom you want to distinguish yourself politically. And perhaps most difficult, how to explain when things are at their grimmest and so many of your fondest dreams have turned to nightmares.

On some level things have been achieved in Southern Africa – there is no more Portuguese colonialism, Mandela is free and the ANC is openly contesting the power of apartheid in the streets of South Africa.

Yet TCLSAC activists take little comfort in these successes. In part it's because the price has been so high. It can be measured in the killings and the fractured lives of the South African-sponsored civil wars that have raged across the region. It can also be measured in the retreat from egalitarian principles that were the idealistic starting point of FRELIMO and the MPLA. For in a strange way, the liberal goals of formal decolonization and formal democracy in South Africa have been achieved or are within

reach but the radical agenda remains as elusive as ever.

This is often our sad fate. Someone once remarked that the radical Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*, his famous expose of the Chicago meat-packing industry, to bring about a socialist America. Instead, he got the Pure Food and Drug Administration.

### Radical visions replaced

So while radicals have often been the ones to fight the battles for basic human rights, the structures of control have shown great resilience in shaping and limiting the extent of these rights. It is easy enough to see how the International Monetary Fund accomplishes this, but it becomes more difficult to face when those to whom you have lent your support replace the radical vision with 'business as usual'. Liberation movements have shown themselves to be all too fallible – willing to violate both their own ideologies, and even at times the human rights of their own citizens and supporters.

One frequent argument has it that this is strictly or largely the consequence of outside pressure and ruthless destabilization campaigns conducted from Pretoria and Washington. But somehow this doesn't seem enough of an answer. For aren't all attempts at radical rupture met with this kind of pressure if not in so brutal a form? Isn't the trick to sustain core values while riding out the pressures? Easy to say; not easy to do. But if the fabric of liberation could not stand up, shouldn't we examine the fabric as well as the instrument being used to destroy it?

Was TCLSAC in these early days too optimistic about the possibilities? Was there too much optimism of the will and not enough pessimism of the intelligence? Did we (and I include myself here) grasp too uncritically the left-wing of a fatally flawed development discourse? The virtues of revolutionary discipline and the possibilities for comprehensive state

planning were frequently overstated in those days. It proved very difficult to sustain the egalitarian ethos embodied in services and development programs in liberated areas once the pressures involved in running a government came into play.

Today in Eritrea (which I know better) the EPLF is undergoing a similar process – although the jury is still out. In Angola and Mozambique the command structures and habits developed in military struggles proved very difficult to adapt to goals like self-management or a more open political culture.

The mega-political project of a 'revolutionary state' soaked up energy and enthusiasm while the development of grass roots democracy and civil society, if not ignored, were simply assumed. At least that's how I remember it.

It seems to me in hindsight (always 20/20) that the revolutionary state is the key issue here. It has turned out to be a contradiction in terms. The state can never be more than a terrain of struggle and the key to solidarity is to nurture an empowering democracy at the base and an atmosphere of total political candour. The old autocratic habits of rule and privilege have an uncanny way of creeping back. And the international structures, even the supportive ones, promote the pomp and ceremony that turns the activist to apparatchik.

### Era of innocence

Certainly TCLSAC has not been unaware of these dangers. But at least in the seventies, I think it is fair to talk of an era of innocence (or perhaps willed innocence) where hopes were elevated and the difficulties that came from within the revolutionary project itself (as opposed to those due to destabilization or underdevelopment) were down-played.

Still, TCLSAC at least tried to address problems where they were considered pressing, sometimes getting into serious trouble with

allies for their pains. The group's scepticism about the campaign to promote the blanket endorsement of SACTU by Canadian trade unions comes to mind. They got a lot of stick for breaking with orthodoxy and supporting the fledgling trade union movement that was developing inside the borders of apartheid.

A similar experience was their sometimes critical support for the African National Congress or liberation movements in Zimbabwe. Liberation movements tend to favour a more unquestioning devotion to the cause.

But talking to TCLSAC insiders and outside supporters or former members, you get a significant difference, at least, of emphasis. The insiders, while not unself-critical, tend to feel that the organization has bent over backwards to face up to problems and difficulties. Those on the periphery tend to think that the analysis came from a small group of core members and that sometimes practical opportunities were sacrificed for the sake of political correctness, that the intellectual tasks of interpretation have too easily replaced a broader program of activism.

It's hard for an outside observer to weigh the balance but if the feelings of the outsiders have any validity, it most likely resides in what it takes for a small group to survive in an uncaring political climate.

#### A voice heard

One of the strengths of TCLSAC over the years has been political intelligence and solid analysis. If you lack the troops (as TCLSAC mostly did and certainly now does) to affect events, you at least want your voice to be heard. Especially if you feel marginalized in the decision-making process, as TCLSAC was when anti-apartheid became a popular issue, even with conservative politicians, in the 1980s. Or frustrated when outcomes (post-colonial development in Portuguese Africa or the divisions



*The Bay was a focus of demonstrations in the early '80s*

amongst the black community in South Africa) are not as you would have wanted. You will want at least to have a clear and alternative political interpretation of events on the record. Sometimes, when voice is all you have, it leads to a preoccupation with getting things exactly right.

There is a line from an old Ry Cooder song – “the thing that makes you rich makes you poor.” This has always seemed to me to have a much broader social application. The things that have made TCLSAC strong over the years – a close knit group of knowledgeable core activists and a strong and clear analysis of events – may also speak to the organization's weaknesses. The level of understanding of these *cognoscenti* has both attracted new people to the group and, at a certain point, repelled them when they failed to achieve the same level of understanding themselves or found it irrelevant to practical organizational tasks.

Everyone associated with TCLSAC gives you a sense of the difficulty the organization has had in sustaining a larger group of activists outside the core. This, of course, is not a problem restricted to TCLSAC. Still, it is widely acknowledged that there has been a constant difficulty initiating new members and sustaining a program of activities to turn passive supporters into active members. This becomes an even greater problem when

money dries up and there is no paid staff to keep things together on a day-to-day basis.

TCLSAC has been a home and a valuable political training ground for generations of activists who have gone on to work in green politics, adult literacy, women and development and many other areas of social struggle. While this is no small achievement, a more successful strategy for integrating activists might have allowed for a more ambitious reach in linking solidarity at home with the forces of change in Southern Africa.

#### Bridging north and south

Such an integration of struggles and issues has always been a cherished goal for the solidarity movement in Canada and development education in general. TCLSAC has done better than many with campaigns against the Hudson's Bay Company, Falconbridge, and other Canadian corporations and, these days, by drawing links between the grinding structural adjustment imposed on popular sectors in the Third World and the devastation of standards of living and employment levels accompanying Canada's integration into the North American market.

But the match between Canadian and Third World struggles, while essential for educated political action, must always remain an uneasy one. Most people who become involved in social struggles are mainly concerned with local issues

twenty years

A direct action campaign was directed at the banks for their loans to S.A. in 1978

and their impact on the everyday lives of those around them. Is there enough work at reasonable wages? Is the water downstream from the factory fit to drink? Is the tax system fair? Can the international context and the knowledge that others are going through similar struggles ever be any more than a side show to the main event playing itself out in neighbourhoods and communities or perhaps on the national stage?

Intellectuals of the Left are always trying to universalize things - to foster fellow feeling and escape the traps of narrow parochialism.

This is a noble and necessary undertaking. But one can become quickly frustrated or even cynical if the expectation is it will provide some magic solution for making Third World struggles a central point of reference for oppositional political culture in Canada. Linking north and south may be a useful tactic but I doubt that it will lead solidarity politics out of its ghetto of specialists or at least those whose personal biographies lead to a special concern. Still, the exposure to a more global analysis and to flesh and blood activists rooted in

another reality cannot but enrich social struggles at home.

If TCLSAC has drawn its strengths and weaknesses from the same source, they have added up to one significant success - survival. These past two decades, particularly the last one, have not been easy sledding for those involved in Left politics. Intelligence and humour have seen TCLSAC through some hard days. A willingness to rethink and challenge assumptions seems to be alive and well in the group. This is no small feat in an era of cynical calculation and passive spectatorship.



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Joan Campbell

Nicaraguan farm workers demand employment and land titles to privatized state farms

## The New Terms of Solidarity: Lessons from Latin America

BY BOB JEFFCOTT

*Bob Jeffcott is a former staff person and long-time member of the Latin American Working Group (LAWG). His article is a personal reflection on LAWG's history of work with the union movement and issues being confronted in this new era. Both SAR and Jeffcott hope it will be part of a continued dialogue between solidarity activists whose work in the past has tended to be compartmentalized.*

Reading "Solidarity in a New Key: The Reflections of a Bespectacled Solidarity Supporter" (SAR

March/92) made me wonder if Jonathan Barker hadn't been listening in at some of our LAWG meetings. But in the era of "globalization," I suppose we shouldn't be surprised that people doing solidarity work related to very different parts of the world find themselves struggling with very similar issues.

Recently I sat in on meetings between a Nicaraguan union leader and national staff of two prominent Canadian unions. The meetings reminded me of similar ones ten years ago when I first became active

in LAWG. But a lot has changed. For one thing, the Nicaraguan labour leader was a woman. She had recently been elected leader of the Sandinista Labour Central (CST), defeating a male candidate at a national convention.

Another difference was the familiarity of the Canadian union staff people with both the historical context and the current situation in Nicaragua. Ten years ago, Canadian union leaders were generally sympathetic to the struggle of the Nicaraguan people against U.S. in-

tervention, but they had questions about the legitimacy of Sandinista unions. At the same time, they felt uncomfortable with the CLC's generally antagonistic attitude toward those unions.

Today, the word "Sandinista" in the Nicaraguan union's name wasn't even an issue. Nor were the people we met with particularly concerned that the CST has decided, for the present anyway, to remain outside the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), of which the Canadian Labour Congress is a long-time member. One of the Canadian unionists recognized the woman from his visit to Nicaragua several years ago as part of a LAWG-sponsored labour tour. One wall of his office was decorated with photos from that trip. Together they searched for her picture in two photo albums he kept in his office.

These may seem like small things, but I think they indicate a changed atmosphere in the Canadian labour movement about issues of international solidarity. There are a lot of factors that have contributed to the increased openness of the Canadian unions on issues of international solidarity. But one of them is certainly the role LAWG played in broadening the vision of Canadian trade unionists about potential allies in Central America.

A strategy for solidarity work within particular sectors of Canadian society began to be developed ten years ago by LAWG and a number of other groups around the country. The sectoral approach was seen as crucial to building a Central America solidarity movement in Canada that was firmly based in the Canadian social movement. We all acknowledged that a Canadian social movement was only in the process of developing, and that there were significant differences in realities and experiences of movements in a developed capitalist country and third world countries in the midst of social revolutions. We may have

been vague on the details of how, but we were convinced, even then, that solidarity between movements north and south could be mutual.

We sensed that unions and popular movements in Central America were crucial to support because by doing so we were strengthening the popular democratic aspect of Central American revolutions. And despite the vast differences in experiences, we believed that contact with Central American movements would offer strategic lessons and inspiration to Canadian activists. We also assumed that victories of national liberation movements in the third world would weaken the global system of domination. In the long run, we saw these victories as aiding our struggles in the north.

In addition to our work with the labour movement, LAWG provided information and analysis to activists in the broader Central American solidarity network. This network was used to lobby the Canadian government to differentiate its policies, particularly on aid and trade, from those of the imperial power to the south. Even in our labour work, we found ourselves focusing on policy issues - the legitimacy of Central American labour unions, the divisive role of AIFLD (the American Institute for Free Labour Development) in El Salvador, the need to oppose US military intervention and the economic blockade against Nicaragua. We joined with other Toronto-based groups in launching the Tools for Peace campaign in Ontario, and encouraged Canadian unions to provide material aid to their sister unions in Nicaragua.

We believed in the mutuality of solidarity. In practice, however, we prioritized the struggles in the south, assuming that it was in the periphery of the global economy that fundamental social change was on the immediate agenda. We had accepted that in the north, the centre, history would unfold according to a different time-clock. As a result, we tended to be more

knowledgeable about the struggles of workers in Central America than we were about struggles in our own country.

We ourselves were also caught up in the spirit of the Central American revolutions. For many of us, the attraction of the Sandinista model was its mixture of revolutionary hope and political pragmatism - acceptance of the mixed economy with a long-term commitment to socialism, a vanguard party that supported political pluralism while promoting popular democracy, an anti-imperialist stance combined with an economic strategy of "diversifying dependency." The Nicaraguan revolutionary process was clearly distinct from the Soviet, Chinese or Cuban experiences. We were attracted to it because it offered new possibilities for reconciling democracy and socialism.

We were never the uncritical Sandinista "cheerleaders" that some more conservative union leaders accused us of being. We did, however, tend to justify changes in Sandinista economic and political policy on the basis of the harsh geopolitical reality - a nation of three million people confronting military and economic aggression instigated by the most powerful country in the world. Whether a more critical stance toward particular Sandinista policies would have served the Canadian movement better is hard to say, even in retrospect.

Certainly there were a number of policies and practices that deserved criticism. Attempts by the Sandinista government to control the price and marketing of domestic grains weakened Sandinista support in the countryside and forced many campesinos into the hands of the contras. Party attempts to direct the women's movement from above and limit its activities to support of national defence alienated some of the most committed and creative women's activists. Sandinista union leaders lost some credibility with their members when they

attempted to justify new economic austerity measures of the government, rather than defending their members' interests.

Although we debated these policies and practices in informal discussions, we tended to avoid public criticism. First we didn't want to add to the massive anti-Sandinista propaganda in the mass media. Second we felt it would be presumptuous for us in the north to demand perfection from a besieged progressive government in a tiny underdeveloped country struggling for survival.

Since the Sandinistas' electoral defeat, these issues have become a subject of public debate in Nicaragua among different currents in the Sandinista party and within pro-Sandinista unions and popular organizations. "Verticalism," a style of leadership in which the party and party leadership see their role as directing the popular movement, has come under heavy criticism. Many party activists have charged that more open debate and tolerance of criticism in the years of Sandinista government might have kept the party more in touch with its base at the time of the election. We in the north might also ask whether a more critical perspective and more open debate within the Canadian solidarity network about these same issues might have lessened the decline of Nicaragua solidarity work after the election.

But we shouldn't overstate the case. Although many of us were surprised and deeply affected by the electoral defeat of the Sandinista party in 1990, we didn't feel the same sense of betrayal that had devastated activists from another era, enamoured with the Soviet model of socialism. The popular democratic aspect of the revolution, didn't collapse with the party's electoral defeat. In fact the pro-Sandinista unions and popular organizations began to assert their right to a greater degree of autonomy and a bigger role in the political life of their country.

The continuing strength of the union and popular movement dispels any concerns that they were ever mere appendages of the Sandinista party or the state.

Subsequent events, not only in Nicaragua and El Salvador, but also in other parts of the globe have shown the limitations of national liberation strategies in overcoming underdevelopment and inequality in the context of a global economy. The fall of "actually existing socialism" in the Soviet Union (now only a historical reference) and eastern Europe was not the only victory of triumphant free market capitalism. Almost without exception, third world countries that have experimented with alternative models of development, with various degrees of self-reliance and varieties of "roads to socialism," have found their experiments reined in or destroyed by war and the forces of the global economy. Even in the developed north, the market is reasserting its dominance over the nation state, limiting the ability of progressive political parties to legislate reform.

Over the past few years, both the liberation and popular movements in Central America and the Central American solidarity movements in the north have been struggling to adapt to this new reality. In many ways, the movements in the south have proved to be more flexible than we in the north. In El Salvador ten years ago, the slogan of the liberation movement was "Revolution or Death." Today, the FMLN sees its role as negotiating demilitarization and strengthening civil society. Its interests, at least for the transition period, converge with those of the modernizing sector of national capital, a sector that recognizes the need to weaken the power of the military and the traditional oligarchy in order to benefit from the process of hemispheric economic integration.

While I would argue that this "temporary alliance" is necessary to achieve a peaceful transition

to a more open society, it does cause contradictions within the movements, particularly at a time when political alternatives to neo-liberalism are difficult to articulate and even harder to implement. As a Salvadorean union leader noted, the modernizing sector of capital is more willing to negotiate peace with the FMLN than it is to negotiate a collective agreement with labour.

As former liberation movements both in and out of state power are pressured to adapt to the constraints placed on nation states by the forces of the global economy, popular organizations are taking on an increasingly important role both in defending the interests of the majority who bear the brunt of structural adjustment programs, and in searching for popular alternatives. In this context, the question of the relationship between parties and movements becomes even more important. Union and popular movements want and need more autonomy, but at the same time, left parties need to renew their relationships with popular movements in order to participate in the development of popular alternatives to neo-liberalism, and to give national coherence to a popular agenda. Parties that lose touch with the popular movements find themselves locked into the terms of debate set by the proponents of neo-liberalism.

The language has changed in ten years. We are no longer talking about an alternative model, but rather about popular alternatives, in the plural. That means at the community and regional, as well as national and international levels. The language may seem less certain, but the openness to new and multiple possibilities is exciting. The positive side of this new perspective is that it encourages people's organizations - unions, women's groups, campesino organizations, indigenous communities, or cross-sectoral coalitions - to take initiatives in searching for solutions to their problems without waiting for the party line or the national

plan. The negative side is the lack of a long-term vision of a more just society and how to achieve it, and a danger of becoming preoccupied with the struggle for piece-meal reforms.

Today, the struggles in the south may be less inspiring to those of us who despair at the slowness of change in the north. The fact that differences between northern and southern contexts are less pronounced, however, means that groups and movements can now speak to each other on more equal terms.

That brings us back to our recent union meetings in Toronto. What struck me most about this visit was that now, when we talk together, both sides are struggling with the same issues. Nobody has the answers, but by strategizing together there is an expectation of finding more effective ways to tackle the problems.

The Nicaraguan unions are experimenting with a novel strategy to confront the massive privatization program of the Chamorro government. Rather than oppose pri-

vatzation outright, they have demanded and negotiated worker ownership or participation in ownership of a significant number of the privatized firms. They call it privatization in favour of the workers. Their experience has obvious relevance for Canadian unionists who are currently debating whether to adopt a similar strategy to deal with plant closures and the economic decline of communities. The examples of Algoma Steel, Canadian Airlines, and the blockade by Sydney rope factory workers to prevent the seizure of their plant's equipment come to mind.

Free trade is another shared issue. Central American unionists want to learn more from Canadian and Mexican workers about strategies for confronting free trade, and they're not just interested in discussion, they want to look at how we can coordinate our efforts.

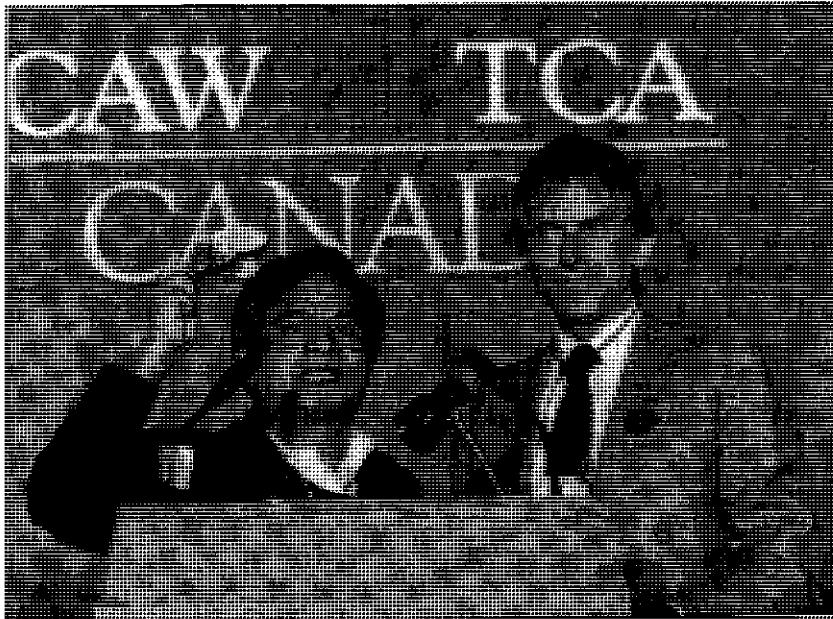
Like TCLSAC and many other Canadian solidarity groups, LAWG has been going through a lengthy process of consultation, redefinition and, dare I say it, restructuring. Changing how one thinks and works

is often the most difficult challenge. Our experience in working with unions in Central America and Canada may help us to make the transition. But to remain relevant we will have to broaden our vision to include the experiences of other sectors outside the organized working class. We need to learn to incorporate into our analysis the key questions of gender, race and environment. And we need to ground our work more in the Canadian reality.

There aren't many certainties anymore. It seems pretty clear to me, however, that in the context of global restructuring and economic integration, solidarity between social movements beyond national borders is not only desirable, it's an absolute necessity. Groups like LAWG and TCLSAC, with years of experience in promoting international solidarity, could help to facilitate discussions between sectoral groups in different countries facing interconnected issues.

Today, the popular sectors throughout the Americas, and in other regions of the world, are confronting very similar problems - unemployment, slashing of social services, privatization, neglect of domestic agriculture, pressures to lower wages, health and safety and environmental standards, increasing violence, particularly against women and children. Groups like LAWG and TCLSAC could play a valuable role in interpreting the experiences of different social movements in confronting structural adjustment and the neo-liberal agenda, and in experimenting with popular alternatives.

This emphasis on popular movements doesn't mean government and political parties are now irrelevant. To be effective vehicles for change, however, they must be democratized. And that implies a different relationship with popular movements, one in which parties respect and learn from the experiences of the movements, rather than attempting to direct them. A positive side,



*Humberto Centeno, leader of the National Unity of Salvadorean Workers (UNTS) addressing national convention of Canadian Auto Workers, 1988*



1988 LAWG trade union delegation to Nicaragua

and they are sometimes hard to see, to the fall of "actually existing socialism" and the decline of national liberation as a strategy for social change, is that left parties could actually become what they always proclaimed they were. That is vehicles for democratization of society, assuming, of course, that they are capable of democratizing themselves.

At the end of our tour, our compañera from Nicaragua spoke to Tools for Peace volunteers. There were fewer people attending than I remember from similar meetings ten years ago. Most of them were loyal activists whom I had known for years, people who had

maintained their ties with Nicaragua despite all the changes there, and in the world. A few were younger people who more recently became involved in Tools for Peace. What was different this time was the degree of openness with which the Nicaraguan union leader spoke about the differences between some sections of the Sandinista party and those at the base in the Sandinista movement. She spoke of how slow the party has been in admitting women to leadership roles, but added that more progress was being made in the unions. She explained how the unions are demanding more autonomy, and asserting their right to put forward their own political

agenda. Then she pointed with approval to a Tools for Peace pamphlet with their new slogan "We're all in the same boat."

All of this is not meant to romanticize unions or popular organizations. Often they have their own problems with democracy. But at a time when the religion of the free market is the dominant ideology, when the political right has declared the end of history, when we are told that there are no alternatives to competitiveness, it's important to recognize that people's organizations are taking the political stage and defining alternative visions for cooperation and solidarity.

# Spectres from the Camps: The ANC's Commission of Enquiry

BY TOM LODGE

*Tom Lodge teaches politics at the University of Witwatersrand and is author of Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945.*

The ANC's Commission of Enquiry into the complaints of its former detainees and prisoners has elicited a surprisingly restrained response in the South African media.

The prevalent sentiment that the ANC's willingness to reveal some of the uglier dimensions of its exile existence contrasts rather favourably with the government's continuing efforts to obscure the extent to which its own officials tortured and murdered political opponents. Newspapers criticized the ANC's refusal to disclose names of people responsible for brutalities but after a week or so following its release in October, public comment on the report virtually ceased.

ANC leaders may well feel that they can now lay to rest the ghosts summoned by their critics from the less heroic chapters of their history. Indeed, several spokesmen for the organization were quick, in the aftermath of Nelson Mandela's assumption of collective leadership responsibility for the abuses, to argue that these should be 'contextualized'.

In a recent letter to the *Johannesburg Star*, Kader Asmal, an ANC executive member and a leading human rights scholar, was biting critical of anyone who might suggest that there was any moral equivalency between government torturers and those employed by the ANC. The latter, he argued, worked in the claustrophobic environment "faced with constant apartheid violence." Asmal went on to claim that, un-

like the government's, the ANC's human rights violations were "fully declared."

## Expand the enquiry?

It would be a pity if such arguments became the official ANC view. Unlike Asmal, Commission members did not believe they had uncovered the full extent of the ANC's mistreatment of its detainees and they recommended that a more impartial-seeming body should be appointed to continue their work. They felt that because two out of the three Commissioners belonged to the ANC, many potential witnesses stayed away. They were also restricted by the terms of their brief which was to establish the conditions in ANC detention centres and the fashion in which inmates were treated.

The Commission was not empowered to investigate the causes or the aftermath of the 1984 Umkhonto we Sizwe mutiny nor was it required to investigate any specific deaths in detention. Finally, it was not asked to identify individuals responsible for any violence or mistreatment.

Despite these limitations, the 74 page report that the Commission released in August represents a fairly damning indictment of the ANC's internal disciplinary procedures.

Of the 17 witnesses who testified to the Commission, 12 were detained without trial, 11 of these for periods of over three years. Some were held as suspected spies and others were confined because of their role in the 1984 mutiny.

## Many abuses exposed

Most of the witnesses were imprisoned at the Morris Seabelo Rehabilitation Centre or Quatro camp,

an ANC detention centre in Angola. They were kept either in overcrowded, filthy and suffocating communal cells or in solitary confinement. There was no running water, no water for washing, and open plastic containers served as toilets. There was no doctor and medical orderlies participated in assaults on prisoners. The food was vile and sparse despite the camp being situated in an area in which food was readily available.

The prisoners were forced to assume names with humiliating connotations. They were forbidden to use their real names to each other. They had to maintain absolute silence during work. Work itself consisted of extremely hard labour: chopping wood, breaking stones and, worst of all, hauling the camp's cylindrical water tank uphill from the river.

For breaches of discipline, a variety of punishments were inflicted: flogging, being forced to crawl naked through red ants, suffocation, partial burial and solitary confinement. Whether convicted or not, the Commissioners concluded, inmates were "denigrated, humiliated and abused, often with staggering brutality."

Convictions in any case were often the consequence of confessions extracted with the aid of torture. The method of choice among ANC security men was beating on the soles of the feet; the former head of the ANC's security department, Mzwai Piliso, actually admitted using this technique to the Commission.

## Summary executions

The Commission found that there were improvements in the treatment of detainees after Piliso's transfer in

1986 and after the implementation of a code of conduct, but that violence against prisoners persisted, continuing at Mbarbara camp in Uganda to which some of the Quatro inmates were transported in 1989. Finally, though it was outside the terms of its reference, the Commissioners were critical of the executions that followed the 1984 mutiny; these, they believe, "may have been carried out summarily."

Aside from Mzwai Piliso, few other members of the ANC's hierarchy are named in the report and those who tend to be are mentioned favourably.

President Oliver Tambo visited the Quatro in 1987 and was "apparently disturbed" by conditions. Chris Hani helped to halt the executions of mutineers and he tried to alleviate the work routine at Quatro by obtaining a tractor to haul the water tank. Though she is not mentioned by the Commissioners, Women's League head, Gertrude Shope also played a decisive role in stopping the post-mutiny tortures and executions. Zola Skweyiya, appointed to the new post of Officer of Justice in 1986, did make strenuous efforts to check the implementation of the Code of Conduct but was prevented from visiting Quatro as late as 1988. Ugandan Chief Representative, Tenjiwe Mthinsu, was perceived by prisoners as helpful and sympathetic.

The report included an appendix, not released to the press, which contained a list of the names of those people identified by witnesses as guilty of atrocities.

#### Unanswered questions

Apart from the identities of the torturers, there are many other questions arising from the accusations made by former ANC prisoners which need answering. Quatro camp existed for nearly ten years, between 1979 and 1988: the Commission interviewed only a fraction of those people who were confined there and none of its administrators.

From the Commission evidence, it is impossible to establish the extent of the violence within the camp or the number of people it affected. Nor do we learn enough about its quality; was the violence merely the product of sadistic impulses by brutalized guards or was it, as ANC critics like Paul Trewhela has suggested in *Searchlight South Africa* in January, purposive and deliberate, the outcome of the East German training of so many members of the security department.

Then there is the question of how many people died as a consequence of torture and other kinds of ill-treatment. According to surviving leaders of the 1984 mutiny, whose narrative was published in July 1990 in *Searchlight South Africa*, several people were killed during torture and beatings after two waves of arrests in 1981, the first following the security department's uncovering of a spy ring within Umkhonto we Sizwe and the second occasioned by a campaign against marijuana-smoking in the Angolan camps. The same sources allege that two of their comrades were killed while being interrogated in Luanda prison in the aftermath of the mutiny and that seven were publicly executed after being sentenced by a military tribunal. (In June 1992, *Work in Progress* quoted Chris Hani as saying he thinks "a big number, about 18 or 19" were executed.)

Apologists for the executions argue that they were in retribution for the cold-blooded killing of loyalists, as was claimed in a letter from Carl Neilhaus to the *Weekly Mail* on 31 October 1992. Mutiny leaders say that killings during the mutiny occurred as a consequence of fighting. They also say that many other mutineers were tortured in front of their friends for extended periods, tied to trees and treated with burning plastic.

Some former mutineers assert that senior Umkhonto officers Chris Hani and Joe Modise supervised the torture and killings after the

mutiny but a mutineer's account, published in the 1990 winter edition of *New Era*, insists that Hani was not involved and indeed that he later reprimanded those who were. Hani himself denies membership of the tribunal that imposed the sentences; when they began, he says, he "rushed back to Lusaka and said to the leadership: Stop the executions."

There is also controversy about the causes of the mutiny itself: the leading ex-mutineers argue that the mutiny was a reaction to the harsh regime imposed by the security department, as well as the unpopular deployment of Umkhonto soldiers against Unita guerrillas; other participants suggest that the mutiny was primarily the consequence of weak leadership and poor discipline in the Umkhonto bases; while ANC officials, including Oliver Tambo in a speech at the ANC's 1991 conference, have blamed the mutiny on "enemy agents."

An ANC Commission of Enquiry into the mutiny chaired by James Stuart did conclude that the behaviour of the security department was at least one of its causes but the Stuart report was not widely circulated within the ANC and its full contents remain undisclosed.

#### Torture: policy or error?

Aside from the extent, duration and location of torture, brutality and killing within the ANC's prisons, and the identity of those officials directly responsible, there are additional disturbing questions which will continue to haunt the ANC as long as they remain unresolved. Was the treatment meted out to the inhabitants of Quatro and other detention centres the consequence of policy, or did it represent aberrant lapses from normal ANC conduct?

In 1990, Albie Sachs told an audience in a speech at Pretoria University that "We did do bad things then. We were anxious and untrained and did not know how



to respond." In justice to Sachs, former inmates have confirmed that many of their tormentors were very young, even teenagers. It is also the case that the worst excesses occurred during the 1984 mutiny or after the discovery of genuine police infiltrators. But not all the assaults can be attributed to the behaviour of inexperienced youngsters (and who, in any case, was responsible for selecting such unsuitable custodians?).

Moreover, Mzwai Piliso, in a press interview, has implied that the way detainees were treated conformed with the conventions which existed at the time: "If you are convinced in yourself that you carried out instructions as best you can, that is all that matters ... I have no guilty conscience," the *Weekly Mail* is quoted him as saying in August.

Sachs and others have pointed to the ANC's code of conduct, adopted at the 1985 Kabwe Conference as evidence of the ANC's efforts to halt the abuses. Why, though, was it so ineffectually enforced? There is plenty of evidence to suggest that conditions at Quatro remained harsh after 1985. Tambo was apparently shaken by what he witnessed at Quatro in 1987 but surely he had the authority to interfere and improve matters? Why did the ANC not punish or demote people who violated its rules? Piliso continued to occupy senior positions even after the ANC's return to South Africa when he headed up the ANC's national campaign committee.

National Commissar Andrew Masondo, whom dissidents identify as a key figure in running Quatro, lost his position on the National Executive in 1985, as well as his post as Commissar, but received instead the directorship of the ANC's Tanzanian educational centre. Masondo was later appointed as Chief Representative in Uganda, replacing the humanely predisposed Tenjiwe Mthinso.

### No punishment meted out

Of course, in the mid-1980s, dismissing or punishing highly-placed leaders might have been very difficult - the ANC was fighting a war at the time - but today conditions are different. Yet the security department continues to function, its personnel largely the same, and many of them are likely to assume commanding positions in a post-apartheid police force.

Disciplining those who violated the ANC's code of conduct should not be a discreet internal matter, for the issues are not confined to abstract considerations of justice. It has important implications for the way in which South Africa will be governed in the near future. It is also in the ANC's interest. As long as leaders appear reluctant to effectively punish transgressors, they will find it difficult to counter accusations that they were themselves actively involved in the commission of violations.

Kader Asmal is quite wrong to suggest that there is no moral equivalency between the torture used by ANC officials and that used by South African government functionaries. Torture is torture, uniformly revolting in whatever context it is deployed. It remains up to today's ANC's leaders to demonstrate through full disclosure that despite this repressive history, one can still point to moral distinctions between the overall character of the organization and that of the South African state. Complete candour will surely demonstrate differences in scale, proportion and degree of degeneration. Without it, though, the ANC's enemies will continue to exploit any lingering doubts or uncertainties.

All that said, it is still true that the ANC has gone further than any similar organization in comparable circumstances in voluntarily exposing its more unpleasant internal past to public scrutiny. That in itself is reassuring and merits some measured praise.



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# The Paradox of Poverty: Politics of Compromise in the Eastern Cape

BY JANET CHERRY

*Janet Cherry works in the Politics Department of Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.*

In July of this year, 20,000 residents of Port Elizabeth marched into the city centre as part of the African National Congress' mass action campaign. Port Elizabeth, the largest industrial city in the Eastern Cape, is as its name implies, a coastal city. The main street runs parallel to the coastline at sea level; the old residential and business areas of the city rise above

it on the hill. As people marched, singing and chanting, along the main street towards the market square, other residents looked down with curiosity from their positions on the hillside. Those who looked down from the hillside were white; those who marched and sang were, for the most part, black.

On arrival in the market square, the 20,000 strong crowd sat down, "occupying" the heart of the city and claiming it as their own. They proceeded to rename the square after one of the ANC's heroes and

martyrs, Vuyisile Mini. "We are residents of Port Elizabeth" they claimed by their presence. "We may live in New Brighton, Zwide, Soweto-by-the-Sea; we may live 30 kilometres from here in Motherwell; we may not be able to afford to shop in the city centre; we may work in Neave or Stuanale or Markman industrial areas, far from here. But we are part of the same city. Acknowledge us. You cannot ignore us." The message was peacefully but forcefully delivered, and generally well received. But perhaps more significant than this



Andrew Courtney - Impact Visuals

*March supporting the Port Elizabeth People's Committee occupation of City Council, August 1991*

central message was the brief prayer session which opened the meeting in the square. After the well-known ministers of various churches had blessed the assembled crowd (the Eastern Cape has a strong Christian tradition, the result partially of the efforts of early missionaries and educationalists), an Imam was introduced. He was now going to say a prayer in Arabic, explained the chairman. The tall black Muslim in his kafiyah requested silence. The crowd, mainly Xhosa-speaking, Christian, and unfamiliar with Islam (which unlike in the Western Cape, has not played a prominent role in "the struggle" in this area), fell into a complete, respectful silence; and as the Imam began to pray, they lowered their heads and raised their hands, palms forward, in the Islamic style of prayer.

What can be seen in this event? Signs of hope, and signs for concern. Concern because the racial divide is still so evident – the "us" and "them" mentality still prevalent. Yet comfort is to be taken from the fact that this is mostly a one-sided process; the acceptance and generosity of most blacks towards the handful of whites who do participate in such marches is almost legendary. Hope is to be found in the tolerance expressed in that act of prayer. Ethnic, religious or ideological divides did not find expression here; people spoke and prayed in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa; Christian and Muslim prayers were offered; the symbols of resistance, struggle and martyrdom were combined with the language of reconciliation and reconstruction, with the extraordinary generosity and goodwill still held by the majority of residents of the Eastern Cape. I see this tolerance as characteristic of the politics of the Eastern Cape. Indeed, negotiations rather than violence are the predominant form of conducting politics in this region.

#### Low levels of violence

Compared with the Transvaal and Natal regions, the whole Eastern

Cape area has experienced remarkably little political violence since the dramatic events of February 1990. In the Human Rights Commission's overview of the two-year period from July 1990 to June 1992, the Eastern Cape and Border (excluding Transkei and Ciskei) experienced 58 deaths in the first year and only 6 in the second. This amounted to 1% of the total number of deaths due to political violence (6,229 for the country as a whole).\*

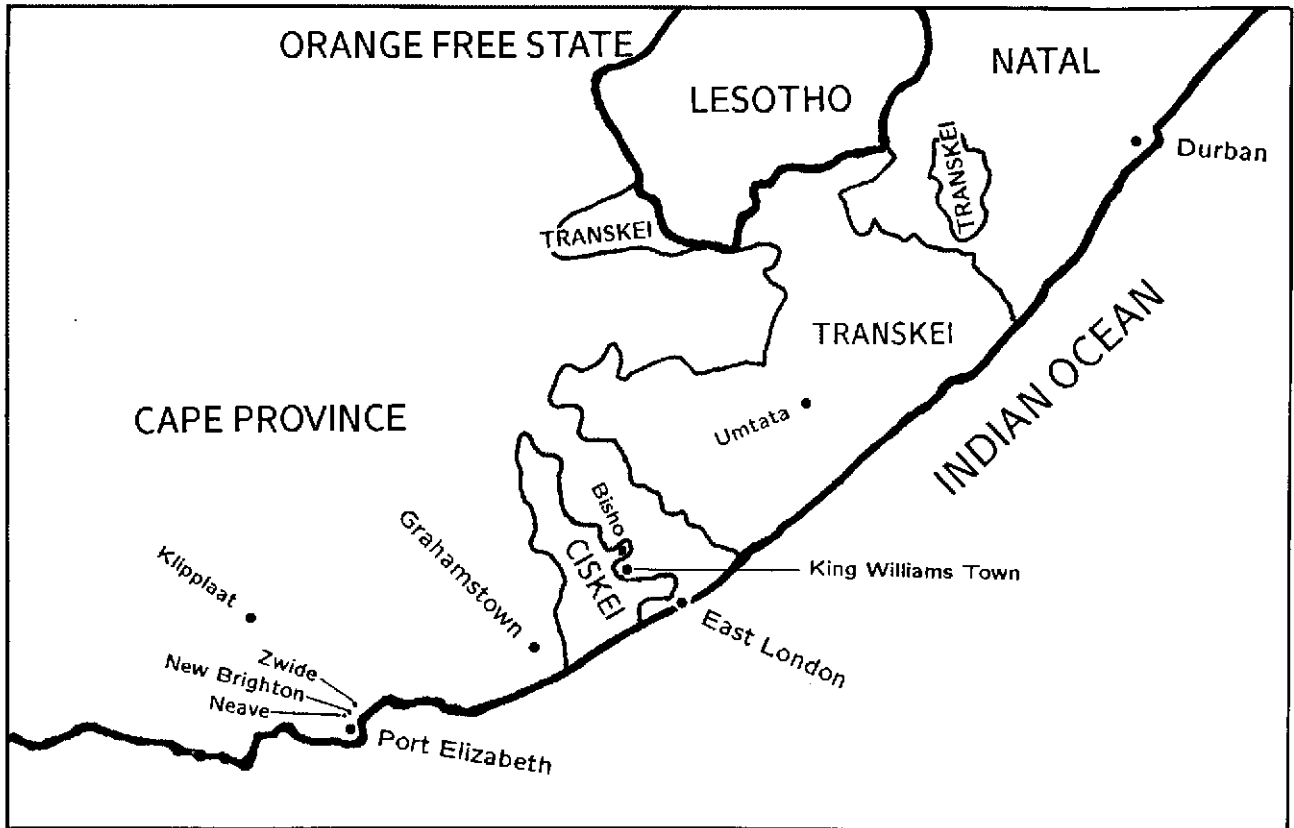
Of course, any assessment of the levels of political tolerance – and of the degree of hope – that is to be found in this part of South Africa depends to some extent on how you define the boundaries of the Eastern Cape. The optimism of one's analysis depends on whether or not the Eastern Cape is interpreted as including the "independent homelands" of the Ciskei and Transkei. Thus, two months after the march described above, Brigadier "Oupa" Gqozo's troops mowed down, in cold blood, 29 people taking part in another march, in Bisho, some 300 km from Port Elizabeth as the crow flies. They, too, were ANC supporters, protesting the lack of political freedom and tolerance in the Ciskei, now under military rule. Their point was made only too clearly by the now infamous "Bisho massacre," the knee-jerk response of an illegitimate ruler to the straightforward demands of the majority for political rights.

But the Ciskei – as well as the vast neighbouring "homeland," the

\* Interestingly, the majority (48) of these deaths resulted from the riots in the Northern Areas (a euphemism for the residential areas of "Coloured" people) in September of 1990. This brief outbreak of violence, quickly regretted and contained, could in no way be attributed to ethnic or political rivalry but rather reflected a spontaneous riot – in an area of weak civic and political organization – of frustrated unemployed youth against the Labour Party-controlled Northern Areas Management Committee's rent policies.

Transkei – clearly merit examination beyond the scope of what is possible in this article.<sup>1</sup> If we are, for present purposes, to confine our attention to the Eastern Cape "proper," not only is the level of political violence comparatively low, but there are other encouraging signs of constructive politics underway. "One-City" talks are in progress in the major cities of Port Elizabeth and East London, and in many of the smaller towns. Sometimes "encouraged" by black consumer boycotts of white businesses, the usually conservative white municipal and business leaders of such towns have realized the need to negotiate with the ANC and representative civic bodies, with the aim of creating single municipal authorities for each town. This "one city, one tax-base" campaign is aimed both at achieving legitimate, representative local government structures, and an equitable distribution of resources within each town or city. While the process ultimately depends on national negotiations and the legislation of a new constitution, significant progress is being made by various interest groups in addressing concrete problems. The electrification of Port Elizabeth's African townships is now taking place under the direction of the (white) PE Municipality, the ANC and the PE Peoples' Civic Organization (PEPCO), for example – the Ibhayi Council, formed in terms of the Black Local Authorities Act, having been effectively bypassed by all parties concerned as a corrupt and near-defunct legacy of apartheid.

<sup>1</sup> More could probably be said as well about the somewhat distinctive politics of the "Border" area of the Eastern Cape which includes the coastal city of East London, the other industrial base in the area and which, if "homeland" boundaries are being ignored, actually encompasses the Ciskei, as well as the strip of white farmland running inland between the Ciskei and the Transkei, including East London and King Williamstown. (See map over page.)



*The Eastern Cape*

In Klipplaat, a tiny farming town of 3,000 North-West of Port Elizabeth, even a member of the extreme right-wing Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) has joined in talks with the ANC, the Conservative Party and the Cape Provincial Administration to "Save Klipplaat from becoming a ghost town." All are involved in forming a "one-city" forum to encourage development and job-creation in the town where unemployment stands at 70%. Other such initiatives are taking place all over the Eastern Cape. These two examples - of a large city of some 500,000 inhabitants and of a tiny rural town of 3,000 - demonstrate the way in which negotiations are reaching down to "grass-roots" levels. But, to cite another case outside the arena of local government politics, an Eastern Cape Women's Coalition was also recently launched (on October 25). It in-

cludes women from all the main political parties in the area, as well as non-politically aligned women's human rights groups such as the Black Sash, ecologically-minded lobbies, and others. The aim of the coalition is to mobilize women to lobby for the inclusion of women's rights in a new constitutional dispensation.

#### **Interpreting prevailing political culture**

How are we to explain the prevalence of the politics of negotiation, and the relative absence of political violence, in the Eastern Cape (as here defined)? Historically, the Eastern Cape has been at the centre of political events in South Africa, from the wars of resistance to colonial domination in the mid-19th century to the "uprisings" of the 1980s. Xhosa-speakers now form the vast majority of

the Eastern Cape population and there is no other African "ethnic group" of any significant size in the area. (The large coloured population is second in size only to that in the Western Cape; the white population is roughly divided evenly between English and Afrikaans speakers; and there is a tiny Indian population based mainly in Port Elizabeth.) Some ascribe the extent of political unity among the black population to this ethnic or linguistic homogeneity; but such explanations fail to account for the desperate divisions in Natal, which also has an homogeneous African population, or the violence in the Ciskei, which is certainly not ethnically-based.

Others attribute the political strength of the Eastern Cape to the missionary influence, the establishment of Lovedale College, later Fort Hare university, and the production



Andrew Courtney - Impact Visuals

Strike demonstration at Port Elizabeth City Council offices, August 1991

of an African intelligentsia. But while some of the ANC's more famous leaders graduated from Fort Hare, for most of this century the black middle class in the Eastern Cape has been relatively small and less influential than the powerful emergent trade union and civic organizations with their large working-class base and leadership.

The ANC undoubtedly has overwhelming support in most of the region. From the late 1940s, the ANC developed a mass-based, grassroots political style in the area (viz., the 1952 Defiance Campaign and various kinds of "mass action" throughout the 1950s.) The 1960s were, as elsewhere, a time of relative quiescence but the 1970s saw the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement, again with some of its greatest leaders coming from the area. Many of the youth who left the country after 1976 to join the ANC's armed struggle came from the Eastern Cape. And in the turbulent 1980s, the rebellion in the area reached new heights, with strong

civic organization emerging in most townships and impressive support for stayaways and consumer boycotts. The resulting era of "people's power" brought in response the harshest repression seen in the country. Under the States of Emergency of 1985 and 1986-89, more people were detained under emergency regulations in the Eastern Cape, for example, than in any other region and numerous activists were killed by the authorities.

Given this history of vigorous resistance and brutal repression, it is all the more remarkable that the Eastern Cape is now relatively free of the violent conflict plaguing other regions, and that the "politics of negotiations" prevail. The same leaders who were tortured, forced into exile, or jailed for years, are now negotiating with their former adversaries with a remarkable lack of bitterness. Politically, then, the Eastern Cape seems to be a haven of sanity, in some senses ahead of other regions. Economically, however, it is far behind. And yet, as we will see, these two facts - political clarity,

economic backwardness - may not be unrelated.

#### Regional economic impoverishment

While poverty certainly exists all over South Africa, it is far harder to ignore in the Eastern Cape than elsewhere. Unemployment is the single biggest problem; small towns like Grahamstown and Klipplaat, mentioned above, have unemployment rates of 70%; a large industrial city like Port Elizabeth has an unemployment rate among the black workforce of over 50%. The re-

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cession is still biting deeply, with three factories in PE closing in the first six months of this year. Severe drought in the farming areas is forcing increasing numbers of farmworkers and their families into the towns and cities. Port Elizabeth's rapid population growth is due not to a high birth rate, but to primary urbanization. The housing crisis has not really begun to be tackled, with a third of the city's black population living in sprawling shack areas, without sewerage, drainage, electricity or adequate water supply. Social diseases like tuberculosis are on the increase. The highly organized, militant African industrial workforce is increasingly vulnerable, with the real threat of a divide between the "marginalized" unemployed shack-dwelling majority, and the employed, formally housed minority. A survey of those who participated in the march mentioned at the beginning of this article indicated that most were unemployed supporters of the ANC, whose main expectation of the future was for jobs.

Rapid urbanization, sprawling shack settlements, overcrowded schools and queues of old-age pensioners sitting for hours in the sun, are not unique features of the Eastern Cape; they are characteristic of South Africa as a whole. It is merely harder, in this economically deprived area, to find the "other side" of South African society; the black middle class consumer so visible in Johannesburg, for example. Even the conspicuous consumption of whites is less conspicuous in the Eastern Cape. Solutions based on tourism, the service sector, the promotion of educational institutions, conference centres and sports events are unlikely to solve the deep-seated economic crisis faced by the region. PE and East London are essentially industrial cities serving a rural hinterland. Yet both industry and agriculture are in deep trouble and the resulting social and economic problems have hardly begun to be challenged in this region, the hardest hit

by recession. There are some glimmers of hope, in the establishment of broad-based development forums; there is a community-based initiative to channel funding for development work in the most equitable ways to the most needed areas; there is a joint initiative between business, the ANC and other political parties to discuss policy options for improving the regional economy; and there is greater willingness on the part of some large businesses to engage in discussions with COSATU about decisions affecting workers and employment strategies in the region.

But economic deprivation also has its effects on political developments. There is a basic lack of resources - financial, intellectual, educational. Thus, there are few skills and few service organizations: the head offices of large companies, political parties, service groups and policy-making institutions are usually in Johannesburg or Cape Town, seldom in Port Elizabeth. The ANC, for example, is hampered by a lack of resources and logistical support. People are willing to join the ANC, but are desperately poor; membership fees remain unpaid and skills are lacking to run sophisticated computer systems. Moreover, literacy levels are low, and voter education and registration are being seen as increasingly urgent problems. Most political leaders in the Eastern Cape do not drive BMWs or own large houses, and only those in key public positions wear suits. There is very little corruption, perhaps, in part, because there is so very little to go around.

#### Clearly burning issues

On the ground, though, expectations have been high - although these expectations are now matched by an increasing sense of frustration with national political processes. While national leadership talk and compromise, delay and strategize, and attend sumptuous CODESA conferences, the people on the ground in the Eastern Cape are getting poorer. Things have

improved in terms of some relief from fear and repression and the increased ability to organize openly (again, with the exception of the Ciskei). But this is cold comfort when people's lives are getting harsher and the benefits of political negotiations are far from being apparent. As a result, the "grass-roots" is becoming increasingly disillusioned and demobilized. Local activists feel excluded from national policy-making and decision-making. And there is even the attitude expressed: "We made the revolution, but now others are negotiating the outcome"!

Without the violent conflict consuming other areas, the political context in the Eastern Cape is plainer and starker. Perhaps this is why the priorities seem clearer here. What people want urgently, desperately, is the resolution of constitutional issues and the establishment of a form of democracy that will ensure that their pressing material concerns are addressed. They want to elect a legitimate, responsive government; they want to participate in the process of reconstruction and redistribution; and they want policies which will first and foremost, meet their basic needs.

The racial divide persists, certainly, but in the Eastern Cape it is offset by a striking degree of tolerance and goodwill. On this front, too, the immediate issues of survival confronting so many in the region seem to produce a strong incentive to set aside petty divisions and knuckle down to the process of transformation in ways that will benefit the poor. The establishment of formal democracy and the extension of the vote to all South Africans cannot ensure that the necessary fundamental transformation will occur. Still, a majority of people in the Eastern Cape see it as a step that must be instituted, and soon, in order that the "real issues" - defined by the need to redress the poverty, inequality and unemployment of those most disadvantaged by apartheid - can begin to be addressed.

# 20 years remembered

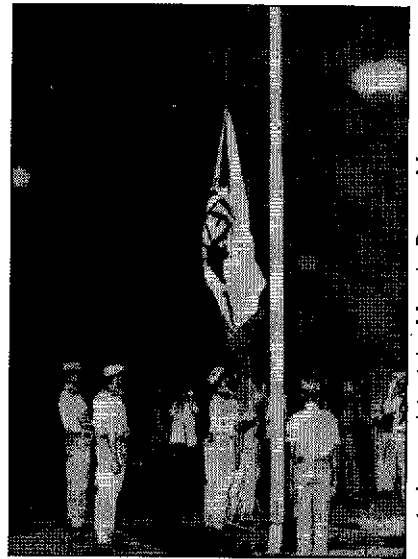
An explosion of resistance in South Africa, ignited by Soweto school children, is sparked by the success of the armed struggle for independence in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola.



Ben Magubane



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The funeral of Samora Machel, Maputo 1986



Alfredo Mueche - AIM



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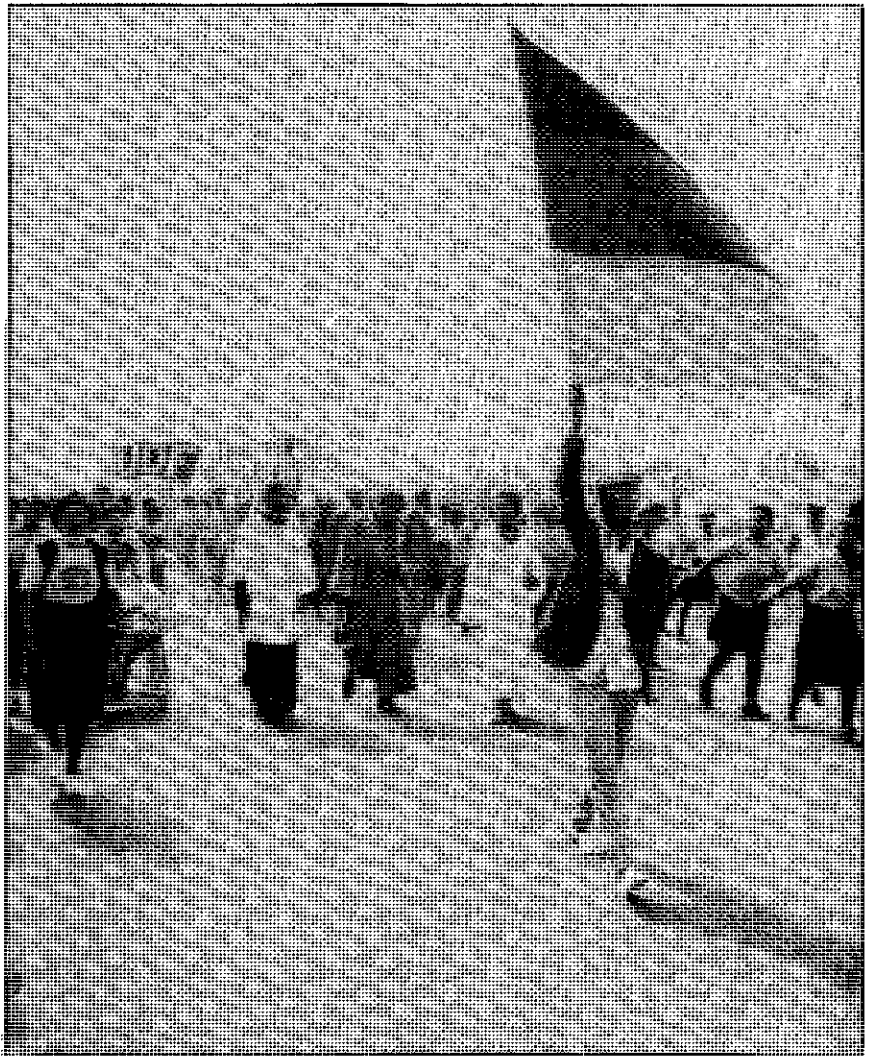
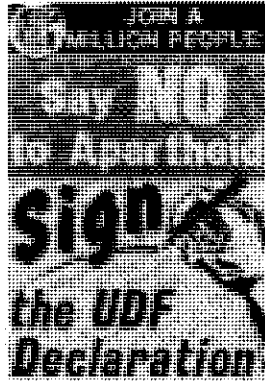




COSATU launch,  
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The 1990's see the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of political parties. The ANC embarks on the perilous journey of negotiations amidst escalating violence. Popular organizations in the region use moments of respite from war and economic hardship to build again.



Rodger Bosch - Afrapix/Impact Visuals



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Zimbabwe Women's Bureau



David Hartman

# Playing His Last Card? Buthelezi's Regional Option

BY GERHARD MARÉ

*Gerhard Maré, a frequent contributor to SAR, teaches at the University of Natal and is author, with Georgina Hamilton, of An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi's Inkatha and the Politics of "Loyal Resistance" and, most recently, of Brothers Born of Warrior Blood: Politics and Ethnicity in South Africa.*

On December 1, 1992, Buthelezi and the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly issued a "synopsis" of "The Constitution of the State of KwaZulu/Natal." The statement, read by Buthelezi, was presented as a first step in the process that will establish the State of KwaZulu as a member of the Federal Republic of South Africa.

The synopsis speaks of a "truly free, pluralistic and democratic society"; entrenches "territorial and personal autonomies" and guarantees "private enterprise" and private property. It also envisages two houses, the upper house elected on proportional representation and the lower house based on "the formation of small constituencies that respect existing cultural divisions." Representatives are to be directly accountable "on the basis of issues and concerns, rather than choosing political parties on the basis of broad ideological imperatives." In this way the constitution ensures a role for "traditional leaders" and "communal property to be administered and regulated" by them; and provides for a KwaZulu/Natal militia with command resting in a "Supreme Military Committee," chaired by the "Governor of Natal."

And indeed most parties, including the National Party – although in its case perhaps somewhat disingenuously – immediately warned against the fragmentation that this

proposal could introduce into the negotiating process. Thus the Democratic Party in Natal said that civil war could result if Buthelezi followed this strategy. On the other hand, the proposal was immediately supported by the Conservative Party, by Lucas Mangope of the Bophutatswana bantustan and by Brigadier Gqozo of the Ciskei – the latter himself quickly calling for a similar region in the eastern Cape (excluding the Transkei). It would appear that Buthelezi had decided to seize the political initiative even if it meant moving ever more forcefully into a camp of the far-right.

The ANC said that the proposal came "like a bolt out of the blue." True, the acknowledgement of some form of regionalism for a future South Africa is accepted by all major political groupings who have participated in CODESA. In content, however, positions range from the extremes of ethnic confederation of the far-right groupings (building on the bantustans and adding a smaller and purified white or Afrikaner volkstaat) to the much weaker 'regions' proposed by the ANC. In a 1992 document issued for debate by the ANC's Constitutional Committee, ten regions are proposed (the term federation does not once appear in the document). These correspond fairly closely to the Development Bank of SA's 1982 development regions, of which they proposed nine; for its part, the Democratic Party also accepts ten federal units.

Where the ideas of Inkatha differ most strikingly from the proposals of the ANC, however, is in the powers allocated to the regions and the composition of any regional government. In their own proposals for regionalism, linked repeatedly in their

document to the need for democratic involvement, the ANC specifically mention "a single integrated defence force" and a "single police force subject to a single set of principles and a single discipline that is respected by all." They state that there will be "interaction" between local authorities and "all organizations of civil society, such as chiefs" (implying an undefined separation); reject ethnicity as the basis of government; and take as a model the powers given to the old provincial council system (elected, until abolished by central government in the 1980s, and appointed since then).

Such a difference of emphasis is unremarkable enough. It is the ANC's own surprise at Buthelezi's initiative that may not bode well – if it should prove to be an indication that the anti-apartheid alliance has been caught without a counter-strategy.

## Inkatha's regional project

Instructively, the SA Chamber of Business (SACOB) unanimously supported the idea of federation at its 1992 convention, responding to a motion, it is worth noting, introduced by the Durban Regional Chamber of Business (DRCB). SACOB argued that competition between regions would foster economic growth as each would have to attract investment and this argument, in turn, loops back to the Natal/KwaZulu region. For it is here that Buthelezi has offered to local and foreign investors, verbally and through his actions over two decades, a disciplined working class. In other words, the form of regionalism he invokes is exactly that favoured by SACOB. Recall that Buthelezi is the man who said in 1981 that the discipline of mine



Abdul Shariff - Impact Visuals

*Inkatha supporters in Soweto following funeral of member killed in clashes, May 1992*

labour is the Zulu equivalent to Umkonktho we Sizwe training camps!

It is probably more than coincidence, then, that the SACOB motion should have originated from the DRCB. For Natal business has all along played a very large part in negotiations for a regional future for Natal. The main forum for such negotiations in the 1980s was the Indaba and its creation was Inkatha's most significant initiative of that decade. The deliberations that occurred within the Indaba seemed to promise something rather different from the racially fragmented vision of apartheid. Indeed, the constitutional proposals it produced set as their target "a single legislative assembly for Natal and Kwazulu" – as part of a distinctively regionalist settlement designed to consolidate the

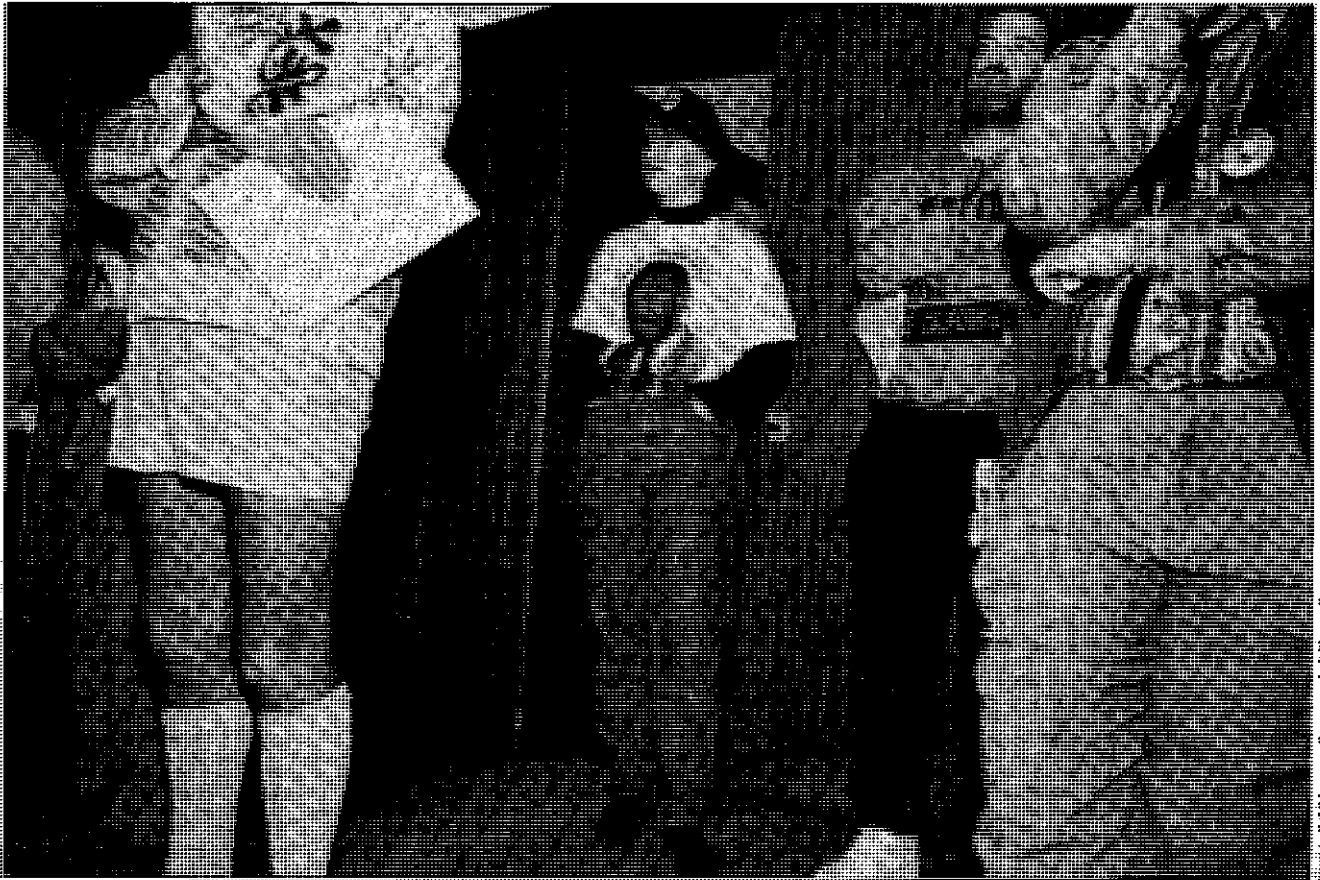
interests both of Inkatha and of its capitalist negotiating partners.

For the Indaba was, quite straightforwardly, a gathering of conservative political and economic forces – political parties involved in the tricameral system; organized capital, regional or in the form that national companies operate in the region; religious and cultural bodies – brought together for purposes of "regional consolidation" by Inkatha. Following on the break with the ANC in 1979, and in the context of the formation and growth of alternative internal and above-ground political structures, such as the United Democratic Front and, a few years later, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, Inkatha was forced to create and occupy political space where its only

strength had always resided – in "the region" as an economic and, especially, an ideological construct.

The Indaba constitutional proposal merely expanded on this premise. With its ethnic basis; with its confirmation (and strong-arm defence) of the "free enterprise system"; with the extensive powers it envisaged for the region; with the non-participation of any elements of the radical alternative to apartheid; and with Inkatha claiming to offer up both two-million "Zulus" and a track record of opposition both to sanctions and to progressive trade unionism to takers of its own "post-apartheid" vision for the country, the Indaba proposals seemed to offer a way out of the morass of apartheid and bantustans that conservative forces could be comfortable





Stellenbosch University students at meeting launching Western Cape branch of Inkatha, July 1992

with. True, the National Party/NP in Natal rejected the constitution produced by the gathering, but that was for immediate political reasons (an election was looming). The government, through minister Chris Heunis, was careful to delay delivering its own judgement on the document.

In fact, at the end of 1989, renewed interest in the Indaba constitution led to the establishment of a joint committee between the NP government and Inkatha. The events of 2 February 1990 and after pushed this committee to the back burner. It seemed that Inkatha, with its by-now extreme approach to ethnic mobilization, and with its involvement in the initiation of violence in the region, was becoming something of an embarrassment to a NP with a new enthusiasm for becoming, for the first time, a truly

national party. In the meantime, over the past two years, Buthelezi and Inkatha have not ceased to push their own independent claims forward. They have sought, for example, to enhance their leverage by demanding recognition, in CODESA and elsewhere, of the "Zulu kingdom" as an additional political participant in its own right. Thus, Buthelezi refused at one point to attend CODESA, in solidarity with his king, Goodwill Zwelethini, who had not been allowed to lead a "Zulu" delegation (Inkatha was represented). Since then, this social construct has been used several times in attempts to give credence to a "Zulu" region and polity that needs recognition beyond the Inkatha Freedom Party - it is said that the IFP now has members of all "racial groups" and is no longer the

vehicle for representation of "Zulus." The notion of the "Zulu kingdom" is also employed to justify the carrying of dangerous weapons during marches (on the argument that these are "cultural accoutrements," the Inkatha term for what had until very recently been "cultural weapons," carried by members of "the nation" rather than of a political party).

#### Peace in the region - and beyond

One could easily overstate the significance of the degree of public distance established between the National Party and Inkatha, of course. A possible "hertoedadering" (reconciliation) between the two could actually become a crucial part of the NP's national strategy as it sheds some of its white support to the far right. Moreover, there are rea-

sons for thinking that the de Klerk government is, for its own reasons, not quite as uncomfortable with Buthelezi's aggressive "regionalism" as it sometimes makes itself out to be.\* As David Beresford argued in *The Guardian* (December 10, 1992) at the time of Buthelezi's constitutional announcement, "there are grounds for suspicion that the government is using (such initiatives) as a stalking horse to find a constitutional settlement acceptable to its own white constituency" and closer to its own model of a central government. Such a model would be sufficiently weakened by "federal compromise" as to undermine the ability of any post-apartheid majority to wield effective power.<sup>†</sup>

But for Buthelezi something even more immediate is at stake. True, he couched the claims of his December statement in terms of the two-century old theme of Natal and Zululand regional autonomy, and with reference to the demand for the construction and the reality of regional distinctiveness. Moreover, his statement clearly revealed its origins in the original Indaba constitutional proposals referred to earlier. It seeks to maintain "traditional authority" and the allocation of land on which its power rests; it entrenches ethnicity in the constitution, and seems to privilege the divisions created by apartheid's "group areas" legislation; it provides for autonomous regional repressive forces; and it sets in motion a process of creating a "federal Republic" from the region up.

However, far more important than the historical arguments or the constitutional refinements underlying Buthelezi's most recent presentation of his position is their all too bald political logic: Buthelezi's attempt to re-consolidate behind himself an alliance similar to that created at the time of the Indaba. What he is offering is a regional dispensation that will be outside the mainstream of a transformed South Africa. In other words, he is attempting to gather together all those whose interests are fundamentally threatened by democratic change – sections of capital, the white right, chiefs, other bantustan officials, and so on. To these people he is offering his own record in government, and his own proposals as formulated previously through such undertakings as the Indaba and now in his constitutional ultimatum.

What, then, are the implications of this Inkatha strategy for realizing peace and a democratic future? It must be remembered that Inkatha has been the governing force over the Zulu-speaking population for 17 years now, and that Buthelezi has commanded numerous aspects of control for an additional five years (since 1970). It is also necessary to restate that it is not possible to separate Inkatha from the KwaZulu Legislative (whatever its present efforts to extend its constituency, as the Inkatha Freedom Party, beyond Kwazulu). It was in commenting on both the duration and the extensiveness of Inkatha control in this respect that Professor Lawrence

Schlemmer, for many years an active Inkatha supporter, noted (warned?) in 1991 that "the IFP controls the regional administration of KwaZulu and could, theoretically, destabilize that administration if it were to fall into different political hands or have its powers or policies altered from above" (the "above" obviously referring to a central government that might attempt to devolve only limited powers to the regions).

In other words, Inkatha's strength as a national actor is primarily that of a spoiler, since it seeks aggressively to demonstrate that, whatever the limited scope of its popular base (even in its "own" region), it will not allow a national settlement to be achieved without it. This much is evident from its current role as perpetrator of widespread violence. But it also hints that the power it retains regionally to administer and control things could be utilized to disrupt any future dispensation – while offering, in addition, a cover for far right-wing extremists, both within state structures and in racist organizations.

To the implicit threat it wields because of its structural control (both administrative and repressive) over the region, Inkatha – having positioned itself to control the very notion of "Zulu" – also presents, both nationally and internationally, the "common-sense" of ethnic diversity. This is taken to legitimate the idea that there can be no settlement without incorporating ethnic veto powers in national decision-making

\* Nor could one deny other kinds of continuing "outside" support for Inkatha in spawning the violence in Natal. However, I would argue that what is most dangerous is the extensive local level support for Inkatha at lower levels and from specific sections of the repressive apparatuses, support not constrained by any of the national or international political considerations that temper the options available to de Klerk (who, in any case, appears to be so insecure that he has

been hesitant to act against elements that are jeopardizing negotiations and hardening ANC options). Furthermore, the KwaZulu Police Force (ZP) offers the option of both denying direct support for Inkatha while continuing to coordinate strategy with what is after all, on one level, simply a branch of the SA Police under a seconded SAP commissioner. (See Paulus Zulu's article, "Political Violence and the 'Third Force'" in the previous issue of SAR [November, 1992]).

<sup>†</sup> As Beresford continues his argument, "Vague federal proposals floated by the government at the regional summit in September ... show that Mr. de Klerk's philosophical approach is much closer to that of Chief Buthelezi than (to that of) the ANC." ("South Africans revive divide and rule strategy: Government suspected of using Buthelezi initiative as stalking horse for settlement acceptable to whites," *The Guardian*, December 10, 1992).





Rafa Mayet - Impact Visuals

ANC president Oliver Tambo addressed more than 50,000 Natal supporters in Durban stadium, January 1992

and/or accepting ethnic control over regions. If this is good enough for Yugoslavia or the Balkans, goes one argument, then it is good enough for South Africa; see what has happened in the rest of Africa, runs another.

There are even some who should know better that have come themselves to propagate such arguments - accepting as a given that there can be no settlement without yielding to Buthelezi's position. What too few such people do, however, is to count the cost of a settlement made *with* the IFP's participation on anything like its own terms. For there is another "common-sense" to be considered, and that is the "common-sense" of a regional population that has for 22 years experienced KwaZulu, Buthelezi and Inkatha rule as an imposition and who have committed themselves both to national movements and to struggle for power at the centre. As Beresford has noted, the "fatal flaw" for Buthelezi and his ilk

is the issue of "a democratic mandate": "it is highly unlikely that Chief Buthelezi can claim majority support in Kwazulu-Natal (and even in the rural areas, it is questionable whether he has overwhelming black support." In short, a large percentage of the so-called "Zulus" are not going to accept a "compromise" that simply devolves power to Buthelezi.

Many thousands of people have been killed in the Natal/KwaZulu region during the past six years, more than 1,100 during the first eleven months of 1992 alone. The killings at Boipatong in the Transvaal justifiably evoked international revulsion, but in Natal, with hardly any publicity beyond the daily moment of a few column centimetres in the local press, massacres occur frequently: Zulus killed by other Zulus at Umbumbulu, Folweni, Trust Feeds, Gengeshe, and many other places. Experience of the politics of violent struggle, of the "capture of territory," of the

"cleansing" of opponents, suggests that there can be only limited acceptance in the Kwazulu/Natal region of anything that smacks of compromise with Inkatha's ethnic politics and with Buthelezi's attempt to carve out a quasi-feudal fiefdom for himself and his followers.

Much violence and misery has flowed from the way in which apartheid and its protagonists have linked ethnicity and regionalism. Buthelezi has clearly stated his vision: "My answer is that KwaZulu will never be broken up, will never be destroyed. Rather, the opposite will happen. We are already looking to Natal, to devise how to retain our joint regional integrity within the greater South Africa. The KwaZulu Police will not therefore be integrated with the South African Police, because the SAP will become the national police force." For ordinary residents of Natal this is a grisly promise indeed. It seems that here, in Natal, much violence is still to come.

# Strategic Unionism: The Debate

BY KARL VON HOLDT

*In his article in the previous issue of SAR (November, 1992), Karl von Holdt, editor of the South African Labour Bulletin, outlined a new "strategic vision of a labour-driven process of social change" that he sees to be surfacing within South Africa's trade union movement, a vision that is, potentially, "of crucial importance to the project of the long-run transformation of South Africa's blighted social and economic system." In the present issue he concludes his argument by discussing further some of the strengths and weaknesses of this "vision" and by evaluating other possible trajectories the trade unions might ultimately follow.*

The new approach that we have identified as "strategic unionism" is only just beginning to emerge. It is not at all clear that it will be successful. What are the prospects for its success? What might cause it to fail? What dangers could arise from its widespread adoption? It is also important to note that, while the strategic unionism perspective is becoming a more coherent and widely accepted one amongst the leadership of COSATU (and to a lesser extent NACTU), it is by no means the only tendency developing within the union movement. We will have to return to a discussion of such alternative possibilities later in this article.

## I. Strategic unionism

Recall, from our previous article, that "strategic unionism" is not based on the assumption that the antagonistic relationship between capital and labour has disappeared: it is no mere policy of peaceful coexistence with capital. It is, in fact, a strategy that envisages a far-reaching transformation of the state, of the workplace, of economic decision-making and of the texture of civil society, a

transformation driven by a broad based coalition of interest groups, at the centre of which is the labour movement. But strategic unionism premises the ensuring of transformation by developing a step by step programme of radical reforms – each of which extends the arena of democratic decision making and deepens the power of the working class.

Such a programme of radical reforms will inevitably run up against the resistance of the dominant interests in our society and the challenge of their counter-strategies. At the core of these opposing interests will be the power of capital. But there will be others: the bureaucracy and the police and SADF inherited from apartheid, the bulk of the privileged white population, and the like. To be successful, it is argued, strategic unionism must be based on independent labour and popular organization, with the capacity to mobilize and struggle. NUMSA's agreement with employers in the auto industry not to let unprocedural strike action undermine the achievement of production schedules demonstrates this clearly. Several employers tried to use the agreement to impose arbitrary new production schedules on the work force. Only the militant capacity of the workers to fight back prevented this from happening.

Strategic unionism cannot succeed if it exists as a perspective confined only within narrow trade union circles – especially in a South Africa where so many are excluded from formal employment. To address these challenges, the labour movement needs, firstly, to define itself more broadly to include not only trade unions but labour-supporting organizations and intellectuals. The labour movement itself needs to build a broader unity – between COSATU and NACTU; between blue collar workers and white collar workers organized in Fedral

and other organizations; and between white and black workers.

Secondly, the labour movement needs to build a broad coalition of popular organizations and interests – including, amongst others, a range of rural consumer and labour interests – around a common programme of economic, social and political reform, democracy and development. It is crucial that the movement for radical reforms be a majority movement – that is, that it be capable of winning elections.

This introduces the third key condition for the success of strategic unionism. The labour movement needs to build a durable alliance with a political party capable of winning elections. In South Africa this means the ANC. Strategic unionism requires the radical reform of the industrial relations arena and of state institutions. Only a government that supports the perspective of strategic unionism and that has the political will to act decisively can ensure this.

The industrial relations arena, like any arena of civil society, is structured both by the state and by organizations within civil society that are independent of the state. If civil society is to be reformed to increase the power of the working class, the government will, among other things, have to:

- extend the legal rights of workers
- extend workers rights to information and consultation to embrace all decision-making in the workplace
- ensure the establishment of national industrial councils in all sectors of the economy
- ensure that the industrial relations system facilitates democratic economic decision-making in the workplace, in industrial councils, in the National Economic Forum, and in other outlying industry forums.

As regards the state there will have to be a general democratization of state institutions on the principles of the transparency of decision making and accountability. New values will also have to be developed in the state bureaucracy. More specifically the department of manpower and the various economic ministries will have to be made more accessible to the trade union movement.

For example, currently whatever industrial policy exists is formulated and implemented by, among others, the department of trade and industry, the board of trade and tariffs, and the industrial development corporation. Yet none of these bodies is accessible to the trade union movement. Unless they become so, trade union attempts to develop industrial policy will have little impact.

**What prospects?**

What are the prospects for meeting these conditions? COSATU did manage to build a broad popular coalition around the anti-VAT campaign in 1991, for example. However, key sectors – the youth, the civics and the rural areas – are extremely weak, so weak that NUMSA officials, Adrienne Bird and Jeff



Eric Miller - Impact Visuals

Twelve week strike of Kentucky Fried Chicken workers in Cape Town, March 1992

Schreiner, have suggested that a democratic state must eventually make resources available for the strengthening of these elements of civil society. Equally troubling, the ANC has failed to develop a coherent policy towards labour. It is, if anything, less influenced by the labour movement than ever before. Big business, the IMF, and the World Bank appear to be highly influential in the top ranks of the ANC's leadership. At the moment the ANC relates to COSATU through the structures of the tripartite alliance, that is at a political level. It does not have a labour department or portfolio through which to liaise with the labour movement on labour issues.

The trade union movement itself – financed by the contributions of its members and by solidarity funds from trade unions overseas – can never have resources like those of the organizations of capital and other wealthy and powerful interests in society. This is one of the key obstacles to the success of strategic unionism. Only the radical reform, not only of state institutions but of other social institutions, can help redress this balance. Reform of the universities and technikons is essential to provide the trade union movement with access to information, research and education. Likewise access to the press and other media is essential to win public support for the policies of labour. A small advance has been made as regards COSATU's access to the state broadcasting corporation. In order to facilitate these reforms, however, the labour movement needs to build broad alliances with intellectuals, the intelligentsia, professionals and their organizations.

Equally important, if strategic unionism is to succeed it will have to find a balance between national centralized negotiations and agreements on the one hand, and local negotiations and initiatives on the other. If, for example, the forging of na-

tional agreements on wages and conditions and on other issues of industrial restructuring and economic development wound up distancing the base from the decision-making process, this could produce demobilization and passivity at the base. And yet, the forging of a strategic unionism approach actually demands an active, mobilized and empowered membership. National agreements should open up scope for workplace and regional bargaining and activity and provide the frame for workplace bargaining on productivity, investment, technology and product ranges (although if the base is to avoid being outmanoeuvred by management in negotiations over such complex issues it will, of course, have to be equipped to do so).

Finally, what about the response of capital to strategic unionism? Generally, capital wants labour to accept a policy of wage restraint, "industrial peace" and a commitment to productivity increases. While in some forums and on some issues employers may be happy to reach agreement with trade unions (for example, on a short term plan for the textile and clothing industry, or on industry-wide training programmes in various sectors), in general they are likely to resist strenuously the more radical forms of co-determination and social reform proposed by strategic unionism.

This raises the question of the limits to co-operation between capital and labour. It may be necessary to coerce employers, through a combination of mass struggle and state intervention, to accept such things as industry-wide bargaining in national industrial councils, the granting to unions of access to company and industry information and the negotiating of investment, technology and production decisions. Such developments will occur, however, only if union efforts are complemented by those of a strong government with the necessary political will. Then, if the costs of resisting strategic unionism are too high, and if there are also some dis-

cernible benefits to be garnered from co-operation, capital may feel it has little choice but to go along with the project of radical reform, at least for the time being.

## II. Alternative tendencies

As noted earlier, there are other tendencies afoot within the trade union movement that must also be assessed.

### (1) *The dangers of narrow corporatism*

It is possible, for example, to discern trends towards a narrow corporatism emerging within the militant trade union movement, a trend based on a convergence between the interests of the most skilled and highly paid layers of the working class and the interests of some of the more powerful employers. Ironically, under certain circumstances, the currency of the idea of strategic unionism could actually play into this trend. Consider:

- The leadership of the trade unions is increasingly drawn from the more skilled, more highly educated and articulate workers including clerical and supervisory workers. This contrasts with the late seventies and the early eighties when the leadership tended to be drawn from the less skilled workers and migrant workers.

- There is an increasing stratification of trade unions within the labour movement. For example, COSATU is dominated by large well-organized and well-resourced affiliates in the metal, mining and clothing/textile industries. Many of the other affiliates are weak, under-resourced and struggling to keep their heads above water.

- There is also an increasing stratification of the employed working class itself. A layer of relatively skilled, highly paid workers has access to job security, a range of housing and medical and other benefits and training and promotion. A much bigger layer of less skilled and low paid workers has access to few ben-

efits and little job security. Often these are casual or contract workers. This stratification exists within companies, between companies and between sectors.

- Many of the most sophisticated employers recognize this stratification and consciously promote worker participation and company loyalty among the more skilled workers. Many employers are attracted by the idea of weakening industrial unionism by building company unionism and enterprise bargaining.

- Finally there is an increasing conflict of interest between a large army of unemployed and the employed working class.

These factors could lead to a convergence of interests between employers and a layer of more skilled, more highly paid and secure workers. Agreements could be reached on higher wages, productivity improvements, training, workplace participation and benefits such as medical aid, housing funds, and the like. Such a situation would place enormous pressure on the trade unions to tailor themselves to the demands of this layer of workers. The result might be a combination of narrow trade union corporatism together with various forms of company corporatism.

Thus, in spite of their intentions to build a broad labour movement and a broad coalition of popular interests, advocates of strategic unionism could actually find themselves facilitating the development of such a narrow corporatism even as they engage in the various initiatives and negotiations over training, industrial restructuring and worker participation in decision making that we have outlined. By their nature such initiatives are complex and this fact could facilitate the domination of more skilled and articulate workers and ultimately of their interests. This danger would be particularly acute if a democratic government refused or failed to reform state institutions and the industrial relations system.

This kind of corporatist unionism would lead to the isolation of the labour movement from the vast mass of the population and their organizations. This, in turn, would undermine any potential that organized workers might have for leading the vast majority of the population in a struggle for greater democracy and ultimately socialism. Indeed it might lead to a situation where the state is prepared to act against the labour movement on the grounds that it represents a privileged "labour aristocracy" which is blocking development for the rest of the nation. At any rate, the exclusion of the majority from economic development would be likely to lead to political instability and an increasingly authoritarian state.

### *(2) The danger of gaining influence and losing power*

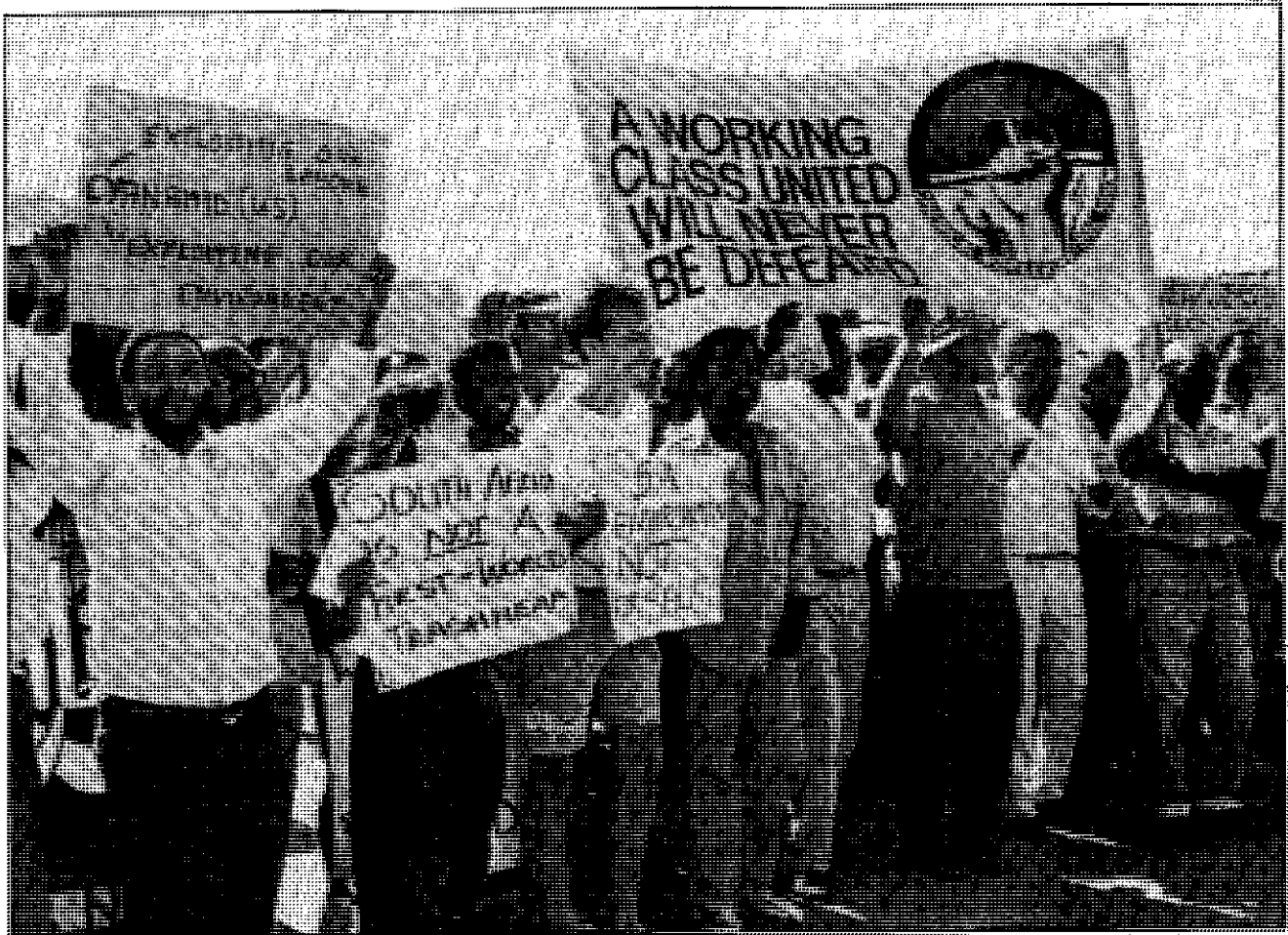
Much of the left wing criticism of "strategic unionism" turns on the very real danger that the attempt to develop such a strategy in South Africa could end up in a situation of "gaining influence and losing power." The truth is that while COSATU seems to be, in many ways, more powerfully and influentially placed within the national decision-making process than it has ever been, it also has real weaknesses - weaknesses, so the argument runs, that the attempt to develop the strategy of strategic unionism might well underscore, and even aggravate. We have noted a number of these above: the labour movement's lack of capacity to launch research initiatives into various policy options (a shortfall reinforced by the underdevelopment of its education programmes); its as yet unproven ability to move capital and the state to accept policies that both ensure growth and avoid hurting labour through wide scale job loss, falling wages and tighter industrial discipline; its own possible bureaucratization and centralization, in the course of carrying out complex negotiations.

As noted earlier, these various factors could seriously weaken the labour movement, opening up a gap of distrust between leadership and base and resulting in a confused, demobilized and frustrated membership. Such a weakened labour movement would then be open to counter attack from employers hoping to impose low wages, hard work and "industrial peace." Division and conflict would then increase: there are already conflicting views within COSATU on the issue of strategic unionism and the failure of this strategy could lead to deep splits within the union movement. Some sections might try to continue with the attempt to advance the strategic unionism project. Other sections might be attracted by the narrow corporatist option, discussed above, while still others might retreat to a policy of militant shopfloor resistance to change.

### *(3) The danger of militant abstentionism*

For there is some tendency towards "militant abstentionism," with many militant activists beginning to fear that strategic unionism will lead, precisely, to a strategy of accommodation with capital, to a narrow corporatism and a disastrous weakening of the labour movement. This militant view has strong roots in the history of resistance in the unions and will be strengthened if the attempt to develop the strategic unionism approach fails - if, that is, capital fails to give some ground to the vision of strategic unionism and, more particularly, if the state/government refuses to support it.

Should the labour movement then be forced to resort to militant abstentionism it has a powerful enough base on the shop floor to block effective industrial restructuring. But the result would then be chronic industrial conflict on the shopfloor, low productivity, low investment and increasing unemployment. In the longer term, this would mean industrial and economic de-



Chemical Workers Industrial Union of South Africa protest their Chemicals' dumping of toxic waste imported from U.S. and Britain, Durban April 1990

cline combined with a weak and defensive unionism. As with narrow corporatism, the trade union movement would be increasingly isolated from the mass of the population. Workers who are fortunate enough to have jobs would be blamed for industrial conflict, low productivity and the decline of industry. And this, in turn, could open up the possibility, at a later stage, of growing state repression and the imposition of an authoritarian model of development.

### III. The vision

We have seen that "strategic unionism" - as a perspective and as a practice - is beginning to emerge to prominence within the labour move-

ment and more particularly within COSATU. However, this development is uneven and hotly debated. It is unlikely that we will see the pure development of one or other form of trade unionism outlined above. The question, then, is not which option will exist in a pure form, displacing all other options. The transitional period is too fluid and fragmented for that. The question is rather: which will be the dominant one?

At the moment, strategic unionism does appear to be prevailing. This is fortunate since, despite the dangers inherent in it, it is quite possibly the only hope for economic growth, job creation and the de-

velopment of a dynamic manufacturing sector. And it is, in any case, almost certainly the only strategy that offers a realistic hope of strengthening and empowering the popular classes in South Africa today. A labour-led programme for economic and social renewal, democracy and development holds out the prospect, if successful, of winning broad support for an ongoing and more radical transformation and democratization of our society. And a broad coalition of organizations, based in the countryside, in the communities, in the work place and in the state and united around a programme for transformation and democratization, could then lay the basis for socialism.



# When Democracy is Not Enough: Denying Angola's Electoral Result

BY VICTORIA BRITAIN

*Victoria Britain is SAR's Angola correspondent.*

Angola's elections in September 1992 were a test case of international political will to move out of the Cold War era and allow a country that has been one of its tragic victims a fresh chance at building a dignified national life. But despite the much-vaunted success of the two days of voting, when 800 international observers testified to the broadly fair handling of the exercise, what was condoned by the international community both before and after was a grotesque charade of democracy. It has set the scene for the possible disintegration of the country.

Just two months after the election, an undeclared war was in full swing. Unita had pulled out of the new unified army and had militarily taken over about two thirds of the country. Unita was demanding a complete rerun of both Presidential and Legislative elections, proposing a transitional government in which it would have equal weight with the government and refusing any meeting between Jonas Savimbi and President José Eduardo dos Santos. Thousands of Angolans were killed in this period, with MPLA local officials singled out for assassinations, tens of thousands of people fled destitute from Unita occupation of towns and villages, millions of dollars worth of damage was done by Unita's wholesale destruction of dams, factories, homes and offices. A more complete failure of the New World Order could hardly be imagined.

By the end of the year, despite fragile local ceasefires, and a new

government having been formed with about 20% of the posts attributed to non-MPLA people, the political stalemate with Unita remained. Senior officials in Luanda still feared that all-out war was inevitable in 1993. As the U.S. and U.N. urged President dos Santos to agree to meet Savimbi outside Angola – and suggested Geneva or Addis Ababa – it was clear that his old backers were more committed to forcing power-sharing on the country than in accepting the democratic verdict of Angolans.

Unita's flagrant contempt in these post-election weeks for the country's welfare, for the Bicesse Accords and for the international community reflects the organization's entirely accurate assessment of the fatal weakness of the Angolan government and the lack of political will in the international community to avert the tragedy so clearly in the making over weeks and months.

## U.N. fails obligations

The United Nations team, led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Margaret Anstee, bears a heavy responsibility for the present situation. Anstee can be held responsible not only for the violent present and future of Angola, but, as serious, for obscuring from international public opinion both the extent and the character of the violence.

This U.N. failure is all the more serious because of the resonance from Angola's experience for the whole southern African region and for Mozambique most immediately. The contrast between Angola's peace process and Cambodia's – both under U.N. auspices – says much about the marginalization of

Africa. Not only did the Cambodian exercise benefit from considerably better funding and more extensive staffing, but top U.N. officials frequently and openly explained that Khmer Rouge non-compliance with the accords threatened the transition process, just as Unita did from the start in Angola. The U.N. in Angola became notorious over the early months of 1992 for its silence on violations of the accords by Unita and saw its acronym UNAVEM 2 replaced by the nickname Unita 2.

The key to the disaster in Angola, which unfolded week by week over the 17 months running up to the election, lay in the deliberately unresolved question of who was really to hold the power in the transition period. The U.N.? The 'troika' of the U.S., Russian and Portuguese officials who oversaw the Bicesse accords between the Angolan government and Unita in May 1991? That other product of Bicesse, the Joint Military and Political Commission (CCPM), in which the troika, the government and Unita were to work in a consensus system? The actual government of the country? Unita's military machine?

## Accord continued war

Like the peace settlement forced on Germany after World War I at Versailles, Bicesse was fundamentally an agreement which set the scene for the continuation of the war by other means. And, like Versailles, this peace imposed by the stronger side (the U.S. on behalf of its ally Unita) contained an implicit political humiliation of the weaker (the government of Angola).

The roots of the problem of power which bedeviled the transi-



tion lay, of course, in the history of the 17 year war of destabilization fought by Unita and South Africa as proxies of the U.S. as well as in their own interests. Under the Reagan Doctrine, Unita joined the Nicaraguan 'contras' and Afghan mujahadin as recipients of U.S. military aid. They received \$250 million of covert aid between 1986 and May 1991. The present could not escape from that past.

The U.S. involvements with Unita went well beyond the armaments, even as far as bringing other governments such as Zaire and Morocco into a deep commitment to the rebels, and to Washington's extended refusal of diplomatic relations with the Angolan government. The relationship was so fundamental as to be irreversible to U.S. policy makers even in the new post-Cold War situation. The implications of this unpalatable fact were overlooked, or at least seriously underestimated, by successive Angolan negotiations. Those who saw the danger clearly were not in power. Even if they had been, it is doubtful they could have sufficiently changed the outcome given the shape of both U.S. politics and the one super-power New World Order.

The real authors of Bicesse were the Americans. The agreement's beneficiaries were Unita. The accord finally gave the rebels the equal status with the government that had been the goal denied them throughout the long negotiations between Angola, Cuba, South Africa and the U.S. which had led to Namibia's independence and the withdrawal of Cuba's soldiers. Unita, like SWAPO, was excluded from those negotiations although their future was at stake.

'No winners, no losers' was the stated principle at Bicesse, but that was merely a disingenuous way of disguising the fact that effective sovereignty had been stripped from the government and a parallel legitimacy given to Unita. Its effects were not visible immediately.

With hindsight it is clear that once the withdrawal of the Cuban troops was completed in 1991 (and with the 10,000 ANC guerrillas gone the previous year), the military and political balance of power tipped in the country and the Angolan government was left without any leverage to negotiate anything with the U.S.

#### **Election no resolution to war**

Two clear signals, at least, should have prepared us for the inevitable failure of the elections as the last act of the war. They could never have been an exercise in democracy in which both parties had a fair chance of winning on the basis of Angolans' choice.

First, after the New York accords between Angola, South Africa and Cuba in December 1988, the U.S. matched the withdrawal of the 50,000 Cubans with a stepped-up supply line to Unita through Zaire and the equipping of new bases in northern Angola as a supplement to Jamba. This prepared Unita for a military option towards getting power that had never been on the cards as long as the Cubans were in Angola.

Second, in 1989, after the first meeting between Savimbi and Dos Santos at Gbadolite, the Unita leader within days had reneged on the agreement made before a dozen African heads of state to withdraw from the country for two years before competing on equal terms for political office.

The trouble with Gbadolite was the equal terms. Neither Savimbi nor his backers were ever prepared for any outcome to the peace except one which guaranteed bringing him to power. The U.S. officials openly said then that Savimbi must be at least Vice-President. During the post-election bargaining, when Savimbi was found to have lost, the British Ambassador in Luanda proposed changing the Constitution so that the Unita leader could be given the non-existent Vice-

Presidential post. And at the U.N., Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali urged the Security Council behind closed doors to press the Angolan government to make that appointment to avert the costs of an extended U.N. mandate for a run-off election for the Presidency.

So flagrantly illegal and destructive has U.S. and South African policy to Angola been since independence in 1975 that the international community has become numbed and has failed utterly either to perceive or denounce it. Savimbi, a creature of the CIA and the Portuguese military, has been a convenient tool for these illegalities.

#### **International press neglectful**

One reason for the intellectual sleight of hand which has so falsely interpreted this situation has been the laziness of the media. The international press simply allowed Angola to drop off the agenda for most of the period or had intermittent coverage done by a Johannesburg press corps notorious for its (mostly unconscious) racist attitudes.

Overlaying this was the distorting prism of the Cold War which meant that Angola, as a self-defined Marxist state partially dependent on Cuban troops for its survival, forfeited all rights to self-defence and development for its population. The costs of what was so often called a civil war, but which was really a South African and American war of aggression, have failed to appall or move a complacent world - 300,000 dead, 80,000 crippled, 50,000 orphaned, more than a million displaced, the highest infant mortality rate in the world, well over \$30 billion worth of material damaged to the infrastructure, more than a decade of U.S.-orchestrated ostracism by the aid community. Angola's demands for reparations of thousands of millions of dollars from South Africa have been completely disregarded.



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Unita has been fighting against the MPLA government since 1975

In this international climate, it was possible for the U.S. and South Africa, with considerable help from western Europe, to organize a 'peace process' in Angola under the shadow of menacing military force, leading to a deeply flawed election which the international community would accept as 'free and fair' and which would, they believed, bring Savimbi to power.

As Professor Donald McHenry of Georgetown University put it to the House Foreign Relations Committee in March:

"Quite frankly, I have no expectation that American policy towards Angola will alter between now and the September election. For, among other reasons, there is an American election and American Angolan policy has always had more to do with American domestic politics than with Angola."

If the western scenario had worked, we should have heard no more about it, and Angola would have become just another marginalized African country where South African and western business flourished and the population failed to.

#### Savimbi slated to win

When Savimbi returned to Luanda a year ago, there were few analysts, Angolan or outsiders, who did not believe he would win the election. The trend in both Africa and eastern Europe was of electorates ousting ossified one-party regimes. Inefficiency, corruption and personal score-settling had taken a heavy toll in Angola and the credibility of the MPLA government was at its lowest ebb ever. Savimbi's closed world of Jamba was little known in the rest of Angola.

The stories of the women burned alive for witchcraft, of the murders of other leaders who might have challenged Savimbi's preeminence, of the kidnapping of youths for the Unita army, of the brutal dispossession of peasants, of the deliberate crippling of the country's infrastructure, were heavily discounted as government propaganda, both in the country and outside.

Those who were in a position to gauge the truth of the stories — which it is now clear underestimated the criminal character of Unita and its leader — chose to remain silent. No American or British officials sounded warnings, though in Portugal and in some French official circles, there was growing concern behind the scenes in mid-1992 about what Savimbi in power could mean for Angola.

The U.N. team, however, that came in as a result of Bicesse, fo-

cused on the technical difficulties of organizing an election. They had to set it up in the very short period of 15 months in a huge country where the infrastructure was virtually destroyed, the majority of the electorate was illiterate and used to living under war-time conditions and unfamiliar with the concepts of electoral choice. At the same time, the two formerly warring parties were still deeply antagonistic, at least at the leadership level.

The Bicesse pre-conditions for the holding of the election bear repeating because, by the time the election took place, they already seemed like something from another era. The accord mandated that the whole country was to return to the territorial administration of the government, the two armies were to be demobilized and a new national army to be formed.

### The West covers up murders

Everyone accepted half-way through the 17 month interim that all three pre-conditions were running seriously behind schedule and that a considerable number of violent incidents were marring the process. But this was accepted by the U.N. and the troika as normal in the difficult circumstances. Again with hindsight, it is clear that Unita never attempted to comply with any of the three conditions. It probably never intended to right from Bicesse for the simple reason that if it had done so, a fair election could have been held. This raised the possibility of Unita losing. How long was it before Savimbi's backers realized that Bicesse had become merely a theoretical framework?

The murder in early January of three British tourists and a New Zealander at Quilengues in Huila province now looks like a key moment, underestimated at the time. Their three cars were stopped at a roadblock in an area where Unita had been in control for some time and there was no government administration. Just off the road

was an assembly point of Unita troops. It was five days before Unita allowed police to visit the scene and 19 days before UNAVEM arrived to launch an investigation.

Unita's clear responsibility for the crime was underlined by a chaotic and unconvincing attempt to frame a slightly mentally disturbed peasant named Celestini Sapalo, and by their continuing use for months of a red Datsun car stolen from the tourists. Nevertheless, British officials have ever since effectively protected Unita by maintaining that the investigation was not clear and suggesting the four were probably killed by bandits, even perhaps by deserters from the government army.

The Quilengues incident remains an important public clue to what other European diplomats in Luanda have described as the British embassy's unconditional support to Savimbi and their diplomats' conviction that he would win the election. It was a conviction that persisted right up until his defeat and took no account of the sea change in opinion between July and September that was most notable among the Portuguese.

### Unita violations systematic

The trends of Unita's systematic breaking of the accords were certainly clear by March. It had continued to occupy about a fifth of the country; had put only young boys and old men in the assembly areas; had kept elite units either outside UNAVEM control or as armed 'pilot committees' in civilian clothes in towns; had refused to surrender any heavy weapons; had terrorized the population by actions such as the Quilengues murders, and dozens of others against MPLA officials who were burned alive, buried alive, shot on the streets. None of these actions ever attracted the attention of the U.N. or anyone else.

By the time U.S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, visited Luanda in April, it was clear that the process was failing

daily. But so great was the international prestige at stake that Cohen took the deliberate decision of focusing on the technical difficulties, minimizing them, and ignoring Unita's flagrant behaviour. Earlier, Jeffrey Davidow, Cohen's deputy, had suggested that the election could easily be held without preparing an electoral register, as time was so short. (He was forced to retract the suggestion by an unusually sharp government response from Luanda.) Now Cohen was suggesting that the possible non-existence of the unified army would be no bar to free and fair elections.

U.N. officials took their cue from this that the elections were to be organized whatever the existing conditions. From the top of the international community, Unita's behaviour was excused as 'normal'. The greatest preoccupation of the U.N. and the U.S. became to keep Savimbi within the political process, no matter what the cost in compromises with the Bicesse.

In the aftermath of the defection of Generals Tony da Costa Fernandes and Nzau Puna, Savimbi's righthand men for thirty years, and Puna's warning that a 20,000 man secret army was being held in readiness for action if the election went against Unita, the west chose silence and inaction. Within weeks, Savimbi's rallies had become the scene of rabid incitement to civil disobedience, several more foreigners had been killed, heavily armed Unita soldiers were openly on the streets of the capital and harassment of MPLA officials, as well as ordinary citizens, was endemic throughout the country.

### Voter enthusiasm a surprise

During voter registration in July and August, brigades of school teachers and civil servants were sent all over the country and 4.8 million people were registered. It surpassed by far the hopes of the U.N. technocrats who organized the exercise. But records of local reports



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to the independent electoral commission showed a chilling pattern of Unita disruption of the registration. Officials were kidnapped, voting registers were stolen, cars were burned. These and other incidents brought local officials to request the cancellation of the register.

None of this was considered by the U.N. as information which should be in the public domain, nor as any shadow over the election. And, in a serious miscalculation, the government chose not to publicize these violations. Nor, after the resignation of Lopo de Nascimento as Minister for Territorial Administration in April, was the fundamental problem posed of how an election could be run in the one-fifth of the country controlled by Unita and mostly off-limits to outsiders. (The Minister in charge from April even said publicly that the whole country was under government control, meaning that question could be dismissed.)

The U.N. technical team took their cue from Ms. Anstee that elections had to be carried out however bizarre the circumstances. The team

systematically violated the spirit and letter of Bicesse by flying into Unita territory with an MPLA official, overseeing registration and flying off again taking the MPLA official with them for his own safety. No canvassing by other parties was conceivable in these places, and there were many reports of Unita officials collecting all registration cards and only handing them out again on election day.

Despite all the corners cut and all the forebodings of Unita's real intentions, the two days of voting, when 90% of those registered turned out, were a moving demonstration of ordinary people's desire for peace, dignity and normal life. And electoral officials had such a deep commitment to the process that many stayed as long as three or four days, sleeping at their polling stations during the two days of voting and then until the boxes were removed.

Chaos and tension started immediately afterwards as the U.N. computers suffered a power failure. Much of the logistics in the regions broke down. Despite the promise by

the Director of Elections, Onofre dos Sangos, that first results would be available within hours of the polls closing, a vacuum of official results allowed Unita to start claiming victory before dawn on the day after the election.

The national radio and television system had dispatched 6,000 journalists to cover every polling station and, in an impressive operation, unofficial results poured from the television hours and even days ahead of the results given by the National Electoral Commission (CNE).

#### Unita claims fraud

Although every result was signed for at the polling station by its official representative, Unita headquarters in Luanda made much of claims of fraud. They delayed the process greatly as the CNE bent the electoral rules to allow a Unita team to verify the independent body's work. No frauds were discovered, but that did not stop a Unita assault on the creditability of the election, nor its threats of war if the results were published. The U.N. made a

fatal mistake in giving in to Savimbi in these critical days, even to the point of bending and breaking the electoral law.

The violence escalated from that moment. Savimbi's flight to Huambo and the withdrawal of his generals from the unified army were a declaration of war. The U.N.'s weakness was compounded by the action of the 'troika' of the U.S., Russia and Portugal, plus the South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, which sent representatives flying off to Huambo to beg him to stay within a political process. Savimbi then had the answer to where power lay in the transition - with his military might.

Herman Cohen, speaking in Washington exactly a month after the election, criticized the government for "its seeming winner-take-all post-election attitude and the confrontational posture of its police force which exacerbated tension." He went on to say that both sides were refusing serious national reconciliation.

His extraordinarily untruthful speech was a telling illustration of implicit U.S. support for Unita's violent behaviour. Dozens of policemen had been killed by Unita and the force's impressive restraint under provocation was noted by all honest observers. Moreover, President Dos Santos had made numerous overtures of reconciliation to Savimbi which had all been turned down flat. Putting both sides on an equal footing of responsibility for the collapse of the peace process (which the CCPM, the U.N. and the E.C. all followed the U.S. in doing in various statements during these weeks) was effectively to continue the old western policy in Angola of working by whatever means to oust the MPLA.

#### MPLA revives

Perhaps the most extraordinary phenomenon of the period just before the election was the vivacity of the MPLA's revival from some

years of ossification and disillusion. After the March meeting in Luanda that welcomed back into the fold some of the significant figures ousted in MPLA in-fighting of earlier years, a more important spontaneous revival of the party began.

All over the country, at every social level, MPLA militants became active. This grass roots leap of faith in the MPLA had little to do with the highly effective and professional public relations job done by a Brazilian firm for President Dos Santos. The atmosphere in which people were prepared to drop everything to work 24 hours a day for the MPLA, in which MPLA stickers mushroomed on dogs' backs and babies' nappies, was a collective throwback to the mood of 1975. Then the MPLA had been a mystique, a myth, carrying the collective hopes of a future with dignity.

It was common to hear people couple the sharpest criticisms of the current government with a firm commitment to the MPLA. In this atmosphere, it was not surprising that the MPLA did better than President Dos Santos (with 55% of the vote against his 49.5%), while Unita did worse than Savimbi. This mood also explains the pattern of voting which showed the MPLA as the only national party, doing well not only in its traditional Kimbundu ethnic base area of Luanda, Bengo and Malange, but also in the Bakongo north, the Tchokwe east, and even in Ovimbundu provinces. In contrast, Savimbi captured a mainly ethnic Ovimbundu vote.

The two third-force parties to make any impact, the FNLA and the Party of Social Renovation (PRS) did so only in their ethnic bases in, respectively, Zaire, and the two Luandas.

In the tense and violent month after the election, the government leaned over backwards not to respond so it could be seen to be ad-

hering to Bicesse. But reliance on the international community's support for such a posture was a miscalculation. It allowed Savimbi to change the balance of forces on the ground from the one-fifth control area he had at the time of the election to about one-third by the end of October. The decision to strike back militarily in Luanda itself on October 30, though using the police rather than the army, came with a statement from the MPLA, not the government or the President.

It was in defence of the MPLA of myth, mystique and 1975 that thousands of civilians, including former FAPLA, spontaneously attacked Unita's armed pilot committees throughout the city on November 1. The unexpected strength of the party, and the clear support of the grass roots for an end to the compromises of recent times, was not likely to swing the international community towards a more honest Angola policy.

Publicly, none of the power brokers in the country in late 1992 - the U.S., South Africa, Portugal and the other western European powers, the U.N. - were supporting Unita. Certainly the self-interest of none could be seen in open support for Savimbi, particularly once he opted out of the political process. But all the signs were that the west and South Africa remained committed to forcing a power-sharing solution which not only makes a charade out of the elections but shows what both Frelimo and the ANC can expect in the next phase of their political history.

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## Inside Apartheid: Memories of a Tanzanian Visitor

BY MOHAMED HALFANI

*Mohamed Halfani teaches at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam. He visited South Africa in April 1992 as part of a team consulting with the ANC and popular organizations about urban policy. He is currently a visiting professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.*

### A view from Morogoro

Growing up in the Tanzanian town of Morogoro during the immediate post-independence period one was exposed to the elements of apartheid at a very early age. Even when I started primary school, I was

aware of young South Africans in town, with their characteristic shaved heads and oversized clothes, the women wearing berets. The combatants not only brought new fads to the local youth; they also introduced an awareness of the situation in South Africa.

As the combatants integrated with the town resident we learned about the agonies of living under apartheid and the necessity of rising up to confront the regime. The location of the ANC office in the midst of our poor neighbourhood brought the fate of the people of South Africa very close to us. Thus, young as we were, we could relate to

the grief of the Sharpeville massacre. We were easily convinced of South African complicity when napalm bombs were dropped on villages bordering Mozambique.

As I matured and became more exposed to the magnitude of the problems within South Africa and their effects on the countries around the sub-region, I started to see apartheid as social poverty, political alienation, and racial segregation. I was convinced that my own background was sufficient for an understanding of South Africa's rampant poverty. I thought it would be easy to understand the helplessness of a people disenfranchised and de-

nied basic human rights. I was confident I could relate to institutionalized racism, having been born into the structures of colonial segregation and having visited societies where some degree of racism prevails.

It was with these conceptions and emotions that I landed at Jan Smuts airport in Johannesburg in April 1992. I arrived with three other colleagues from Canada at the invitation of the ANC and the civic movement of South Africa.

#### **At the gate of apartheid: victory or surrender**

My first encounter with a representative of the South African government at the airport immigration desk was a soul searching moment. It brought back all the memories from the old days in Morogoro. I was not sure whether it was a moment of surrender or victory. Was the person behind the glass counter at Immigration still an enemy, or a partner in search of a solution for change? Was my entry through the same door as my Canadian colleagues a capitulation on the part of the apartheid structures or was I yielding to a facade? How could I explain what I was doing to my folks back in Morogoro, to my illiterate mother who had given away the only family rooster to the liberation fund.

#### **Race, poverty and the apartheid city**

One hour after landing in Johannesburg I found myself embroiled deeply in conflict. The receptionist at our hotel asked me to put down three times the deposit demanded of my Canadian colleague. Both of us were paying in cash. When we protested, a supervisor intervened only to inform me that the issue was about my deposit and not a comparison with the other guest. He argued that the amount I was asked to put down was less than what the hotel required. If this had happened in Tanzania I would have interpreted it as outright incompetence or an attempt to solicit a bribe. In the

case of South Africa, I was tempted to concur with a passer-by who attributed the whole incident to the fact that I was black. This left me flabbergasted; the receptionist was a black sister!

My first challenge on entering South African society was to come to terms with a reality perceived largely by three shades: white, black, and coloured. I heard no discourse devoid of the element of pigment. The notion of "a person" does not exist in South Africa; instead there is "a black" "a coloured" "a white." No wonder, a certain Peter who lives in a shack in the ghettos of Capetown, is popularly known as "Whitey." The abnormality of his situation is captured only by his caucasian origins and white complexion, and nothing else. Similarly, the gradual movement of young black professionals into the Johannesburg city centre is described as the "greying" of the city.

In the first days of our mission there were many points where I had to reconcile my earlier conception of apartheid with the reality I was encountering. I became aware that even from the distance of Tanzania, I had also become a victim of apartheid. I had failed to get beyond a perception of the South Africa situation mediated by colour. The correspondence of the oppressor and the oppressed with the colours of white and black was so deeply ingrained in me that I was not aware of any other possible relationship in apartheid South Africa. I was convinced that factors such as class or ideology were more or less subsidiary, that they could not disturb the inherent antagonism between every black and every white, and vice versa.

I realized quickly that my Tanzanian perception was overly simplified, basically focusing on the racial camouflage of the system. I discovered, to my happiness, that there are more white South Africans actively engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle than I had thought. I began to

appreciate the necessity of penetrating the colour barrier and discovering the heterogeneity of the social and political forces in South Africa. And I realized that in the course of its development, the system had also undergone a process of internal change, with many forces fractionalized.

Coming from a post-colonial society which has been in the least developed category throughout the twentieth century, I believed that I had a fair experience of what constitutes poverty and misery. My confidence proved to be unfounded. I was amazed with the poverty in South Africa, a wretchedness uncharacteristic of other parts of Africa. Capetown resembles the best part of the French Riviera and houses only a few thousand people. It poses a stark contrast to the sprawling shack colony just a short distance away. Here more than a million people are packed into makeshift housing without proper infrastructure, except for powerful security lights to monitor them, and tarmac roads which ensure rapid deployment of armoured carriers to quash any riots. Shacks are constructed out of waste materials such as plastic sheets, packing cases, cardboard boxes and aluminium cans. Old garments are used to partition the sleeping places and provide some kind of privacy. Here infants, teenagers and old people freeze through the cold winter nights. Most of the shack compounds lack schools, clinics, water facilities and even proper toilets. The image of poverty would shock even a resident of Mathare valley in Nairobi - one of the worst squatter settlements in the continent. The contrast between the "white city" and the "black compound" is so profound that it is hard to believe the two places are in the same country.

The poverty and deprivation are aggravated by the density of the settlements, where people subsist in marginal economies like petty



trading, brewing beer, and plain criminal activities. Apartheid has made conditions worse by destroying the peasant agricultural sector, evicting people from their lands. The result is a massive movement to the townships, now crammed with heterogeneous groups of residents, hostel dwellers, squatters and those living in shacks.

A striking revelation to me was the internal heterogeneity of a township such as Soweto or Alexandra or Mdutshane. The local population in a township is divided into the residents, the hostel dwellers, the squatters and the shack dwellers. The residents are comprised of tenants in the council houses and a few plot owners who have built or bought their own houses. "Black" and

"Coloured" residents live in separate compounds.

The hostel dwellers are the labour recruits from the homelands who are supposed to be single and are expected to be accommodated only during the brief period of their employment. Of late, the hostel dwellers have become more permanent and have brought their families to live with them in the single room structures. Squatters and shack dwellers are both illegal settlers who have invaded land around the township. While the former have more or less stabilized, the latter are still struggling to get established and their tenements are even more temporary.

The numbers involved in the different categories and the gravity of

the social problems and contradictory interests of each group create a serious problem of urban land in the post-apartheid South Africa. While in other parts of the continent the land issue has been largely a rural problem, in South Africa the problem may well be more intense in the urban centres. In addition to the challenge of integrating the bifurcated apartheid city into a single city, there will be a broader challenge of integrating the millions relegated now to the fringes into a single set of economic and welfare policies.

The problem of the city in the future South Africa will be aggravated further by the current inattention to rural development programmes which could check the rural exodus to urban centres. At



Anna Zieminski - Impact Visuals

Meeting of Mogepe community members to mark the 4th anniversary of removal from land in which they had been living since 1911, February 1988

this point, understandably, more attention is being given to the question of land ownership. This problem is the more urgent because the apartheid regime is rapidly selling away "public" land to private corporations. At the same time, white farmers are consolidating their usurpation rights by evicting the local population "renting" the largely uncultivated farms.

While acknowledging the urgency of the land problem, any resolution of the land question has to go hand in hand with preparation of a multi-faceted rural development policy. The experience of Zimbabwe, Namibia and even Zambia is too fresh to be ignored.

#### A revitalized civil society

The three-decade ban on anti-apartheid organizations and the disenfranchisement of the black population left a serious void at neighbourhood level. Local communities lacked a legitimate institution to articulate their interests. While in the workplace the trade union movement was a strong force for promoting the struggle, residential areas did not have an equivalent mobilizing machinery. The existing institutions of local government in the townships were imposed and controlled by the apartheid regime and hence considered illegitimate.

Communities, therefore, could only turn inwards. They had to organize and push through their demands. Organizing through their common identities as squatters, as women, as church goers, as youths, or simply as neighbours, they succeeded in building a social movement capable of mobilizing the people to wage a successful boycott against rent and service charges, to organize alternatives to the services they were deprived of, to resist evictions and to plan for land invasions.

Within a short period, almost the whole black population throughout the country was galvanized into forming community organs called "civics." Nowhere else in the history

of post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa has civil society become so revitalized. In the process, it has turned into a potent force that supersedes even the emergence of major organizations like the ANC, the PAC, and the Communist Party. With empowerment and popular participation gaining prominence in the discourse on Africa's development, the evolution and role of the civic movement in South Africa will provide useful lessons for other countries.

The vibrancy of the civil society in South Africa has generated an intellectual discourse which is either missing or weakly developed in the rest of the continent. Intellectuals in other parts of Africa are still searching for effective ways of empowering communities through structures of local government, decentralization, civil associations, or community organizations. The discussion in South Africa, however, is conducted from a non-statist perspective focusing on the social configuration of the civil society, its organizational potential, its relationship with the state and political parties, and the future role of the civic movement. The concrete experience of South Africa has enriched this debate to a level unsurpassed anywhere else in the continent.

At the same time, the strength of the civil society has reached a level that also allows for re-examining the relationship between intellectuals and society. Some civic organizations are raising concern that there is a danger of intellectuals substituting for the people through their monopoly of skills and expertise, subordinating the people's felt interests and promoting their own technocratic way of thinking. The movement is also guarding against the possibility of intellectual exploitation. They have recognized that as the civil society liberates itself and engages in policy negotiations, the need for intellectual and technical skills will intensify. Correspondingly the civic movement will need to avoid situations in which

the benefits of research and consultancies accrue mainly to those with intellectual and technical expertise. There is a need for constant review of the partnership between the latter and civic associations. In few other African countries has this issue been so cogently raised.

#### Adjusting the frame

On entering South Africa I immediately realized I had to adjust my perception of its realities. As I travelled around the country I was shaken and depressed by the depths to which one group of human beings can reduce another. Towards the end of my stay I discovered a ray of hope. I realized that a society does not simply give in, even to the most vicious oppression. The resurgence of civil society in South Africa is the most precious endowment to emerge out of the apartheid system. I had a yearning to replicate this resurgence in my own country.

Absorbed by these afterthoughts as I boarded the plane out of Jan Smuts, I was given a parting shot by the apartheid regime. I handed over my ticket at the check-in counter. A moment later, the airline staff shouted to my Canadian colleague two meters behind me, "Madame, tonight there are two flights to London and yours is the second one. It will leave an hour later." When my colleague angrily responded that the ticket belonged to the person who gave it to him, the poor fellow casually explained, "Oh, I thought he was carrying your luggage." All I could do was laugh.

Exhausted but glad to be back in Canada, we landed at Pearson International airport. While the more than three hundred passengers of our Boeing 747 were waiting to pick up their luggage from the carousel, I felt a jerk on my shoulder and turned to see an identification badge flashed in my face. "Can I have your travelling papers sir?" I pinched myself, confirmed that I was awake, and again all I could do was laugh.

# Waiting for Clinton

BY ANNE GRIFFIN

*Writing recently in Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly ("Waiting on Clinton," December, 1992) sometime SAR correspondents Jim Cason and Bill Martin note that during the recent US presidential campaign "the continent's name rarely passed the candidates' lips, and Africa policy, if measured by the level of campaign rhetoric, will be very low on any list of priorities for the White House." They do suggest that "the globalist, East-West framework that drove even Carter's policies is as dead as the Cold War that generated it" but fear that "the replacement of Cold War policies with the rhetoric of democratic liberalism can easily translate into application to Africa of equally globalist if 'democratic' politics." Aware that "the key constituency for Africa remains the African-American community," they also worry at Clinton's campaign strategy of distancing himself from some Afro-American leaders, "notably Jesse Jackson and his supporters." For Cason and Martin the key question thus becomes "whether groups in the U.S. will be able to successfully mobilize strong grassroots activity around the country" - this at a time when, unfortunately, "the broad-based networks of activists that mobilized to force the passage of sanctions over a Reagan veto" are "shrinking fast." We intend to monitor this changing U.S. scene closely in coming issues of SAR. For the present issue we asked Anne Griffin, Deputy Executive Director of the influential Washington-based lobbying and public education organization TransAfrica, to reflect on some of the key issues groups like her own will wish to see President Clinton actively address.*

Now that the U.S. presidential election is over, all eyes can now veer from the volatile campaign trail to the prospects for change that have been promised by the victor: President-elect Bill Clinton. Although the American public is relieved that the bombardment of political attacks and counterattacks has come to an end, those concerned about foreign policy, especially the formulation of a revived U.S. agenda toward Africa, can not rest so easily. In an era that has become overwhelmingly "home-focused," many fear that Africa will be virtually ignored as the Clinton Administration tackles the challenges of an economic recession, massive unemployment, a frightening deficit, a crisis in health care as well as a host of other domestic concerns.

Southern Africa, however, can ill afford to confront the current challenges of civil strife, embryonic democracies, severe drought and displaced people, in isolation. The world must not only observe and monitor these events, but must help to usher these countries into a new era in which democracy and human rights engender higher priorities. It is believed that as President, Bill Clinton will in the end recognize the important role that the United States should play in foreign policy toward Africa.

The hills and valleys of Southern Africa's political landscape cry out for American involvement. There are many recent examples: the turmoil that followed the first democratic elections in Angola; the tenuous ceasefire that was belatedly signed between Renamo and Frelimo in Mozambique; the protracted and troubled attempts at negotiations in South Africa; and the devastation that threatens to befall an estimated 18 million people afflicted by drought in the Southern

African region. These are only a few examples where an informed U.S. policy can make a difference.

In South Africa, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress have confronted stalled negotiations with new fervour. Despite the spiralling violence and the public exposure of the South African government's "dirty tricks" campaign, the ANC has approached de Klerk's National Party with a set of specific compromises that will theoretically ease the white minority's concerns about its livelihood in a post-apartheid society.

In a statement released on November 19th, the African National Congress announced its intent to reenter talks and to consider plans that call for a "constructive interaction" with F.W. de Klerk's governing party. The compromises would include sunset provisions in the constitution that entrench powersharing for a set number of years after the final Constitution is adopted and before majority rule. The ANC also has accepted the notion of general amnesty, which would include the release of white right wing vigilantes who were imprisoned due to violent crimes. The ANC has agreed to offer job security and general amnesty to the military and the police. The ANC also plans to endorse a multi-party partnership to run the country during transition until a new Constitution is written and elections are held. Finally, after the adoption of a new Constitution, the ANC may consider a government of national unity - provided that losers of the election will not be able to paralyse the government.

With democratic elections in South Africa expected in a year to eighteen months, it is important that the United States take a stand to infuse the atmosphere that surrounds the talks with as much

trust, integrity and legitimacy as possible. The new State Department under the Clinton administration needs to take an inspired leadership role in condemning the barrage of violent acts, such as the Boipatong massacre in June, September's Bisho shootings in the Ciskei and the assorted indiscriminate killings on commuter trains and within townships. As new episodes of faceless terrorism cover the front pages daily, the United States must be quicker to reprimand the state's malfeasance and to investigate the powerful role of the South African state security forces as they wage covert war on black leaders and privately support the "third force." Unlike during Bush's tenure, the Clinton Administration must invest more of its energies on aggressive yet constructive criticism of responsible parties. The United States should no longer hide behind vague claims of neutrality.

The blood bath in South Africa must be stopped. Over 3000 deaths have occurred due to political violence in this year alone. President-elect Clinton must place blame where it is deserved, and pinpoint the direct role of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, as well as the African National Congress, when warranted. In several recently publicized cases, the African National Congress has ad-

mitted that it has committed abuses in its detention camps. It also admitted that its party must share the blame for South Africa's political violence. It is unfortunate, however, that the Inkatha Freedom Party has not been as willing to accept its role in fueling the strife in South Africa. Bnthelezi's followers continue to brandish so-called "traditional weapons" in public gatherings and to use the hostel dwellings as a base for attacks on innocent blacks in the townships. Although the November 15th deadline for fencing in these "violent flash points" has passed, F.W. de Klerk has yet to act to stem the tide of violence emanating from the hostels and to address the open defiance of the bans on cultural weapons.

Violence is the single most important impediment to negotiations and the transition to a democratic Constitution and free election in South Africa. Over 1,500 people were killed in attacks launched by hostel dwellers, according to the Independent Board of Monitors. But it is commonly felt that the mayhem is encouraged by elements within the right wing and left wing, all of whom fear the change that would cause the country to lurch toward majority rule.

The United Nations can play an invaluable role. On July 21, former Secretary of State and now United Nations special envoy, Cyrus Vance, arrived in South Africa with a mission to revive the stalled constitutional negotiations between the Pretoria government and the ANC. In a report, submitted to United Nation's Secretary General Mr. Boutrous Boutrous-Ghali, Vance promoted the conditions and the terms of a general amnesty between the South African government and the ANC. As a result of Vance's intervention, the government and the ANC held two high level meetings in August to discuss the release of prisoners that the ANC insists are jailed for their political beliefs. The United Nation's actions to resolve the political stalemate has included the presence of the first UN monitors in South Africa to observe a general strike between August 3-4. It is expected that the Clinton Administration will continue to use American leverage to urge the UN to stay actively engaged in the South African conflict.

South Africa can be the engine for economic growth and political development for the region, and even the continent. The United States must participate in priming



Vigil at South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. commemorating Bisho massacre, September 1992

Jerome Friar - Impact Visuals

this engine for the critical role the country must play. Most importantly, the United States must, as Clinton stated in his campaign, "begin to distance itself from corrupt and dictatorial leaders in Africa." He proclaimed that "we need to devote special attention to the struggle for democracy in South Africa. The stakes there are very high, and what happens in South Africa will inevitably affect the prospects of democracy and economic growth in the rest of the continent."

Only after the Clinton administration's foreign policy personnel is appointed, will the American people know what to expect. Fortunately, various statements by the president-elect thus far have indicated that he understands the efficacy of a prosperous South Africa. He also seems to recognize the need to maintain pressure on the current South African regime, to force them along the road of change. Clinton has specifically asserted that he supports continued state and local sanctions against South Africa. In fact, he supports these sanctions as well as continued restrictions on lending from the International Monetary Fund, along with other "diplomatic pressure, until irreversible, full and fair accommodation with the black majority (is accomplished) to create a democratic government with full rights for all."

Excerpts from recent statements also suggest that the centrepiece of Clinton's policy toward Africa will be support for efforts to democratize throughout Africa, not merely South Africa. "If we are to lead a global alliance for democracy," Clinton claims, "we must be willing to work as hard in Africa as we are working in other parts of the world." He emphasizes that "our top priority must be to foster democracy."

With this goal in mind, Clinton must recognize the strides that are being made throughout the Southern African region. Chiluba's

recent victory in Zambia, the newly independent Namibia, and Botswana's relative success story must be supported with financial support as well as rhetoric. Other African countries, in the midst of various stages of development must also be recognized. Angola and Mozambique are just two examples of America's need to recognize, at long last, the end of the cold war and the beginning of a new policy framed by the dictates of a more authentic version of President Bush's "new world order."

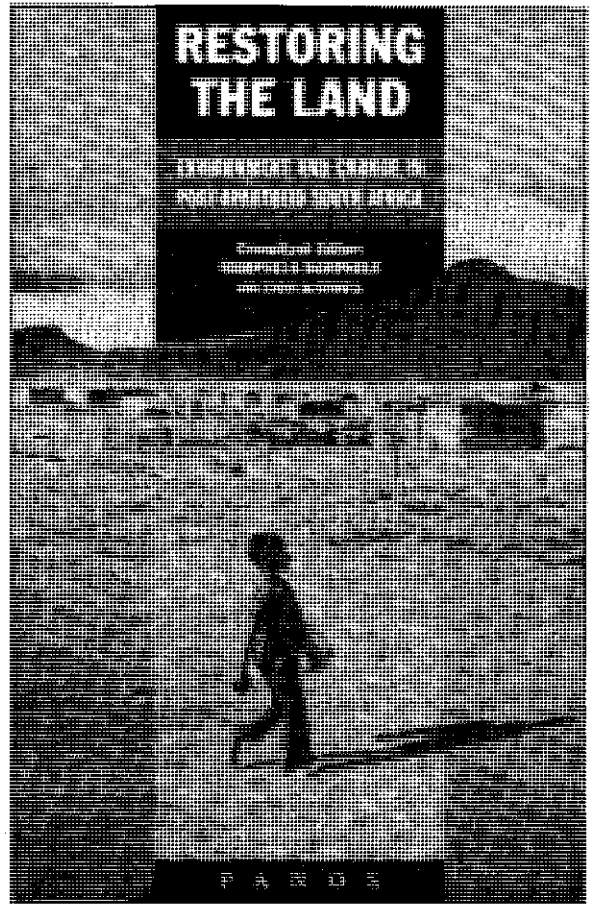
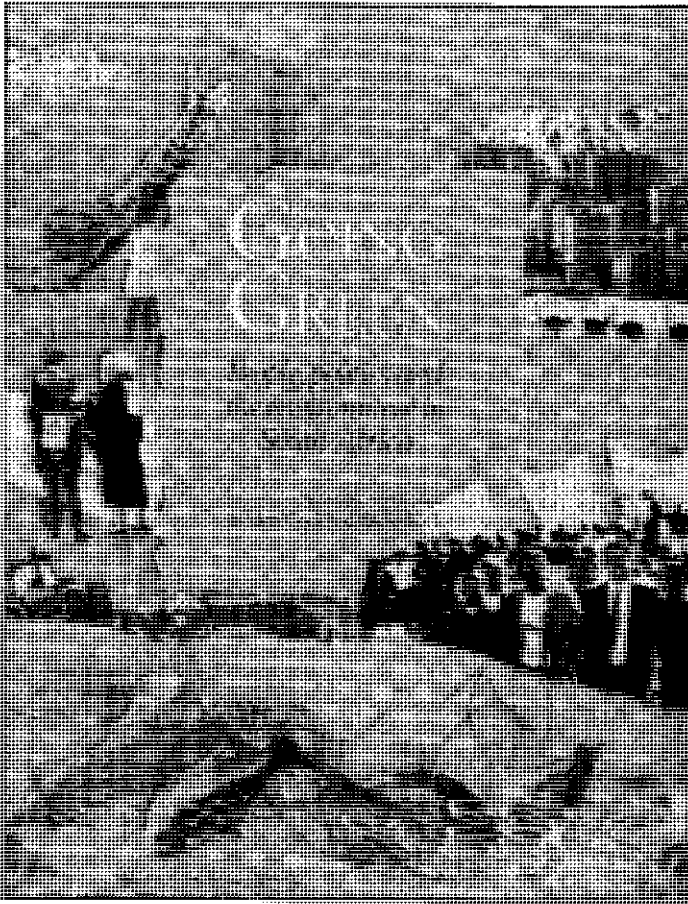
In Angola, the policy of the Reagan/Bush years, contributed to the war-related death toll of 300,000 people, and a country with the highest amputee rate in the world. While the sixteen year old war has finally come to an end, the aftermath of the September election in which José Eduardo dos Santos narrowly defeated Jonas Savimbi of Unita, looks tenuous at best. Over 1,000 international observers concluded that the elections were "generally free and fair." But Savimbi is not eager to accept electoral defeat and may not even stand for the second presidential election which is mandated by the Constitution. Furthermore, Savimbi denounced the voting, claimed that the process was rigged, threatened to renew civil war, and pulled his troops out of a joint Angolan army.

An attempt to meet with all twelve parties this week to discuss a unity government had to proceed with only eleven parties, because the seat reserved for Unita was left vacant due to Savimbi's refusal to participate. It seems that millions of American dollars in covert aid did not convince Savimbi of the value of democracy, but merely of the power of the gun. Under Clinton, it is hoped that one of America's favourite "freedom fighters" will receive strong and consistent reminders that the military well has run dry and that his only political option is to stand by the results of a second election.

In Mozambique, the story has yet to unfold. Renamo and Frelimo signed a ceasefire on October 4th, which will lead to elections by late next year. Each side has now agreed to cooperate in a democratic process that will foster the reorganization of current political structures, with elections in October 1993. Renamo leader, Afonso Dhlakama, has not demonstrated a sterling commitment to a democratic solution. Thus, the optimism and diplomatic fanfare that followed the ceasefire must be tempered by the harsh realities of life in Mozambique: an economy in ruins, an infrastructure in great need of rehabilitation and a population reeling from the effects of prolonged civil war and the worst drought in decades. It is critical that United States pressure be levied on both parties in Mozambique, to select a peaceful solution over renewed civil war.

Over twenty nations in Africa are in various stages of democratization and recovery from civil strife. Many face the challenges of deadly famine and drought. Others simply need the moral, diplomatic and financial support that too often than not is consistently sent to other parts of the world, bypassing the needy African continent. The entire world is changing, not merely Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The potential for Africa is enormous. Because the United States played a role in the destruction of many countries in Southern Africa, American foreign policy in this new era of leadership has an expanded responsibility to remain engaged.

As President-elect Clinton begins to assemble his foreign policy team, interested constituencies like TransAfrica Forum, will stubbornly hold the new Administration accountable to the high standards of the polished rhetoric used during the presidential campaign. These bold promises described a new U.S.-Africa policy shaped in the mould of a strong concern for human rights and the principles of democracy.



## It's Not Easy Being Green: Environmental Politics in South Africa

BY DAVID McDONALD

*David McDonald recently spent two years in Botswana and is currently researching the political economy of the environment in South Africa.*

*Going Green: People, politics and the environment in South Africa* by Jacklyn Cock and Eddie Koch (eds.) Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1991. 262 pages; and *Restoring the Land: Environment and Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa* by Mamphela Ramphele (ed.) Panos Institute, 1991. 216 pages

As a deepening ecological crisis rears its head in every corner of the world, so too does political response and reaction emerge. But given the very different nature of the problem in 'third world' societies, the responses are bound to be dramatically different than those of mass consumption countries of the North. Analysis in the South must speak for both the urgency of environmental degradation, and manifest a commitment to (at the very least) the provision of basic amenities and jobs for the vast majority of people that have been

marginalized and exploited in the past.

This dilemma is nowhere more evident than in South Africa. With its myriad of challenges still to be tackled, South Africa would seem the last place to try and wedge in another priority – especially if that priority is perceived by many to be an economic luxury. The 'dirty now and clean up later' approach to the environment has a strong appeal in cases like this. Why should we, the saying goes, be told by industrialists and academics in the North that we can not do what they did to their

environment, and must sit by and watch our people suffer in order to save a rhino or a tree.

Such a response to environmentalism carries a certain emotional power and historical rightness to it. It does not, however, display much foresight or political integrity, as two recent books out of South Africa quite graphically demonstrate (*Going Green: People, politics and the environment in South Africa*, Jacklyn Cock and Eddie Koch (eds.) Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1991; and *Restoring the Land: Environment and Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Mamphela Ramphele (ed.), Panos Institute, 1991).

Essay after essay in these edited collections of works by leading activists, journalists, academics and unionists is at pains to illustrate not only the extent of environmental decay, but also, as Albie Sachs puts it, that "the greening of [South Africa] is basic to its healing." Improved socio-economic conditions (particularly for black South Africans) are seen to be inextricably linked to a 'greener' concept of development in a post-apartheid state.

For the most part, the books are very similar in style, focus, and long-term vision, with several authors having contributed to both. Many of the standard environmental issues are covered (eg. biodiversity, air pollution, ozone depletion), as are more topical subjects like asbestos waste and institutionalized racism. Neither of the books is laden with heavy technical or academic jargon, and the essays flow together quite smoothly. *Going Green* may appeal to a wider audience, however, with lots of photographs, uncrowded pages, and large print captions in the wide margins – somewhat of a coffee table book for activists.

When it comes to solutions, the cohesiveness of the individual essays that make up the books is stretched thin. What is offered is at times contradictory, and in the end

leaves many unresolved tensions. Given the newness of environmental thought in politics and economics, these inconsistencies are inevitable, but the points being raised in these books need to be further unpacked if ecology is truly to become more political, and politics more ecological.

## The extent of the problem

Both *Going Green* and *Restoring the Land* characterize South Africa as a microcosm of global environmental issues. The dichotomy of 'first world' and 'third world' within one country has resulted in an ecology that is impacted by both overdevelopment and underdevelopment. Concerns with nuclear waste from power stations sit cheek-to-jowl with a lack of basic sanitation in squatter settlements. This juxtaposition is used to illustrate the direct linkages that can be drawn between these two standards of living – the unbearable conditions of townships and 'homelands' being a direct result of the creation of white neighbourhoods and wealth.

For the most part, white South Africans have sheltered themselves from this ecological fallout but this cannot continue indefinitely. Mercury levels in Johannesburg's drinking water exceed WHO and European Community standards. Intensive, chemical-dependent monoculture on the white farms has produced pesticide run-offs and nutrient depletion to a point that even the best land in South Africa is in danger of imminent exhaustion.

And yet, it is still the black labourers who have to spray these nasty pesticides with little or no protection for themselves. And the situation on the 13% of land allocated for 'homelands' is far more critical than that faced by whites. Pressures for food and fuel have denuded these areas of trees, overgrazed the land, and resulted in enormous (and perhaps irreversible) losses of soil.

It is in the urban areas, however, where 'environmental' condi-

tions are most conspicuously harsh. Layers of soot and trash blanket treeless townships like Soweto, while children play in backed-up sewage water. Industrial complexes belch out toxic emissions with heavy social and health costs, while people live literally in their shadows. Rapid urbanization (over 100% in Durban from 1970-1980) has further aggravated this situation.

## The reasons for the problems

In both *Going Green* and *Restoring the Land* environmental decay is blamed primarily on apartheid. Apartheid is responsible for overpopulation in the rural areas and townships, and the related pressures on the land. It is responsible for the poverty that exacerbates environmental degradation by forcing people to make desperate moves (such as cutting down fruit trees for fuel wood). It is responsible for the corrupt regimes in the 'homelands' that import toxic wastes from other parts of the world in order to line their own pockets with cash.

But apartheid does not explain everything. There is also a concern in many of the essays with Western style developmentalism in general. Top down planning and the overwhelming focus on large scale urban industry is heavily criticized as a part of the problem and inappropriate in the future.

## "The way forward"

An important theme in both of these books that distinguishes them from the average publication on the environment is a search for the very definition of environment. The debate on this issue is not always explicit, but arises in the diversity of essays selected by the editors. In *Going Green*, Rod Crompton and Alec Erwin (of CWIU and NUMSA respectively) argue that 'environment' must be seen to include the immediate working conditions of labourers. Others raise concerns of what is sometimes referred to as 'brown' ecology (eg. sanitation, sewers, etc.).



Some of the articles address wildlife, blue oceans and our human-centric attitudes. When seen in this light, it is hoped that the environmental movement can unite workers ("the first line of defense in the fight for a safer environment") as well as bird watchers, to form what Eddie Koch calls a "rainbow coalition" across class, race, and gender.

There are a host of specific recommendations that fall into this more holistic sense of 'environmentalism'. In the rural areas alternative farming techniques (eg. organic) are viewed as necessary to resuscitate and sustain the land. Basic information and extension work is needed for this sort of initiative, but much of it is also seen to exist (or did exist) in traditional farming and grazing techniques. Redistribution of land and small-scale farming are considered integral to these programmes (as is access to credit and markets in some of the essays).

In the urban areas, basic needs are put front and centre. But what this entails in terms of energy supply, for example, is a contentious point in both of the books. There are conflicting solutions of how to supply power to the 60% of the population that does not have electricity. Do you build more nuclear power plants,

use solar power, continue with coal stoves and lamp oil (since they are more "reliable"), or try and reduce the energy consumption of whites (amongst the most wasteful consumers in the world)? There is also a call for more public and green spaces in the townships and stricter pollution controls, as well as new ideas like wood lots along urban streets for fuelwood. All of this is seen to require a good dose of imaginative thinking, and a lot more co-ordination of effort by the all too often divisive political bodies created by apartheid. With the recent escalation of factionalism (however one chooses to represent it), this need for co-operation may prove to be a major stumbling block.

Whether environmental solutions lie with more "market options," "traditional conservation practices," "tighter environmental legislation," "workers as the first line of defence," or a combination thereof, is something that is left for the reader of these books to ponder. The glue that it is hoped will link these alternative views together is a new environmental "ethos." This is an important conceptual step forward, but as with the definition of environment, it is unclear exactly what this "ethos" is and what it means politically.

The most significant focus in both of the books is the call for a fundamental shift in decision-making power to local communities and associations. This kind of grass-roots emphasis is a major theme of environmental literature outside of South Africa as well, but it swells to a battle cry in many of these essays. I will look at the ramifications of this pre-occupation more closely below.

## Comments

Despite the wide range of topics and perspectives covered in these books there is bound to be a number of issues that are either not raised, or are dealt with inadequately. There is not enough discussion, for example, of regional integration. Benjamin Pogrud looks at the SADF's environmental legacy in southern Africa, and Hugh McCullum looks more broadly at SADCC, but this constitutes only 12 pages of *Restoring the Land*. Regionalism is something that must be addressed closely by environmentalists; particularly in the areas of energy supply, food production, and research and development. There can be enormous benefits from regional integration while decreasing dependency on markets and technology from the North which can make demands on ecological and social systems that



A woman in Transkei carries the only locally available fuel; from Barbara Kingman's chapter in *Going Green*

are incompatible with 'sustainable development'. In fact, there is no thorough discussion of the linkages of North and South at all in these books. Nor is there an in depth critique of 'industrialism' as separate from socialist or capitalist versions of it. As experience in eastern Europe has shown, heavy industry has heavy costs, under whatever aegis.

The central role that women play in environmental issues is a topic that is dealt with directly in only one essay (in *Going Green*, by Barbara Klugman, a social anthropologist). Especially in the black communities, women are generally the ones who bear the largest burden of environmental problems (eg. having to walk hours to collect fuelwood, or come up with clean water for their children in a squatter camp). They are also the people least consulted on politico-economic questions, and this is true across racial lines. Women have contributed significantly to these two volumes of essays (both have female editors), but the reader is not left with the sense of urgency that many books by feminist writers on ecology in the 'third world' exhibit (see for example: Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Zed Books, 1989).

It is the grass-roots focus of the two books that is the most appealing and yet at the same time the most problematic. There is little doubt that top-down, large scale, economic policy must be balanced out by local, smaller scale, and to some extent 'traditional', economic activity. In the essays, there is a recognition of the tension that this kind of economic shift creates with a large, centralized 'state' that will not simply wither away in a post-apartheid society. But the depth of this tension, and the dynamics behind a big bureaucracy in a significantly industrialized economy are not really addressed. If a more 'sustainable' future is depicted as too intimately dependent on a grass-roots strategy, then state/society relations will not receive the level

of attention and analysis needed in environmental dialogue.

In some ways, it is the state that really needs to be the focus of attention. Chances are, the state apparatus will grow in South Africa. Whether this is dominated by the ANC or is some sort of coalition with Inkatha, the National Party, and others, the state will play a dominant role in socio-economic policy in the near future at least. The ANC is preparing a 'green' paper, and other political parties are paying lip-service to the environment, but one must question the extent to which this will really make any difference to policy positions of the past.

The magnitude of short term necessities (jobs, better pay equity, provision of basic services, etc.) is going to make it very difficult to keep a longer term vision in mind, let alone in practice. And with the pressures of political expediency, short term plans run the risk of becoming enemies of long term policies, in a never ending cycle. Environmentalists must argue for changes in state policy. Trying to develop a theoretical and functional framework for a more environmentally 'friendly' political economy for the state is therefore just as important as looking to grass-roots initiatives. This will also help to foster an atmosphere of co-operation rather than confrontation. State level planning should not be seen as necessarily antithetical to community level activity.

Unfortunately, political and economic theory is weak in this respect. Conventional analytical models, from Marxism to modernization, are unable in many ways to deal with the sorts of issues that environmentalism raises. To make things worse, the debate that is being waged as to where and how these models need to be changed, is largely taking place in a 'first world' context. As such, it is not necessarily applicable to the realities of the 'third world' conditions that most South Africans face. But

if South Africa is to have a national politics amenable to a longer term environmental strategy (and since, as Jacklyn Cock argues, "environmental issues are political issues") then conceptual state level alternatives need to be developed. This is all the more relevant to *regional* environmental efforts.

The World Bank has produced its prescription of what needs to be done. This year's entire annual *Development Report* is dedicated to resolving the global environmental crisis. The neo-classical tools and analysis employed can not be entirely rejected, but they are far from satisfactory. It is up to the 'left' to develop a framework appropriate for the 'third world' that can challenge, and where necessary incorporate, the World Bank's appraisal of environmental problems and solutions. Otherwise state level policies run the risk of being swamped by the technocratic and ideological hegemony of this brand of neo-liberalism.

Nonetheless, these are more comments on rather than criticisms of the two books in question. The central aim of the books is to raise awareness of a massive environmental problem in South Africa and some of the reasons behind this. This is done quite effectively. The working through of alternatives is still in the embryonic stages, and there is no need to apologize for that. These authors can be commended for going beyond the 'flavour-of-the-month' rhetoric, and for taking up a serious matter at a difficult time without coming across as 'trendy'.

The high degree of politicization in South Africa should help to stimulate further dialogue on what can be done. Once environmental issues are perceived and discussed as being an essential component of political and economic thought at all levels, and not just the privileged domain of white urbanites, then 'environmentalism' will at least have found its place in that country.



# THE MEANING OF PEACE

**F**or people in the Ethiopian province of Tigray, and in so many parts of the world, peace means some very basic things. It means a secure, reliable supply of food. It means having uninterrupted access to fresh water, and materials to build proper shelter. It means educating children instead of training them for war.

The United Steelworkers Humanity Fund understands because we are there. We have relief and development projects in Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and in Central and South America. We know that, in areas of conflict, the job of providing relief is difficult. Development might be impossible.

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For Steelworkers, it means that, when we go to the bargaining table, we take the *World* with us.

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