

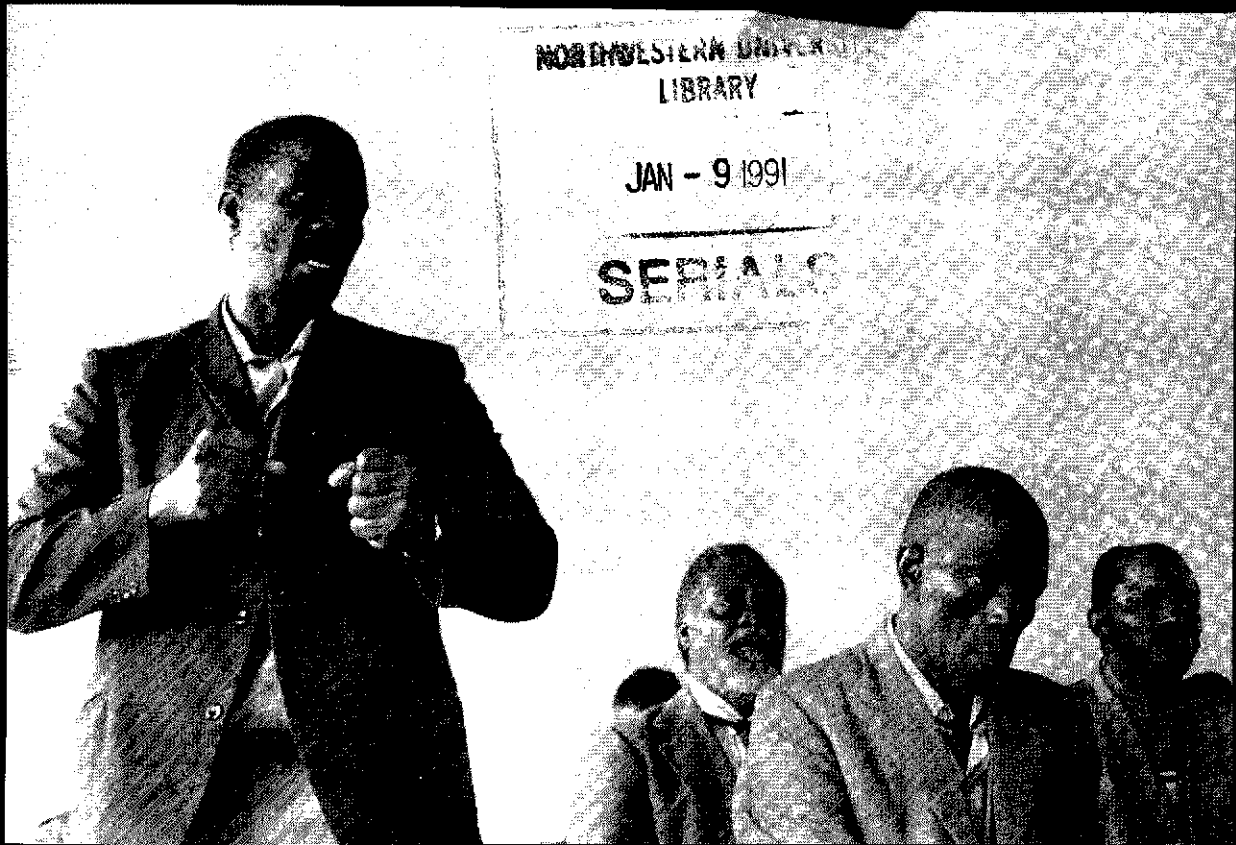
**Southern Africa**

Vol. 6 No. 3

# REPORT

December 1990

## Settling for Less? Canada – South Africa 1990



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Getting Rich  
Together?  
Canada and  
South Africa 1990

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Why are  
Anti-Stalinists  
Joining the SACP?

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The New Moment  
in South Africa  
What Kind of  
Solidarity?

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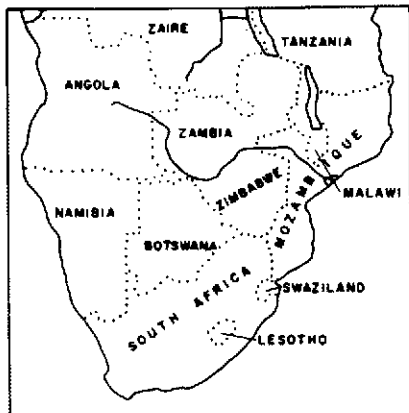
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# Southern Africa

Vol. 6 No. 3

# REPORT

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## Southern Africa REPORT

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F. W. De Klerk

## Our Man in Pretoria

Don't say we didn't warn you. Once again, Linda Freeman's annual survey of Canadian government policy towards southern Africa makes chilling reading - as she reveals Canada to be inching ever closer to accepting President De Klerk's *bona fides* as the single most legitimate and trusted arbiter of acceptable change in South Africa. "Waiting for De Klerk": that's what we entitled our editorial prefacing Freeman's article last year. As 1990 draws to a close our government seems ready to accept that the wait is all but over - and that De Klerk is, indeed, "our man."

What about the ANC? You might well ask. As Freeman further notes, the Canadian government has continued to keep the ANC very much at arms length - this in spite of

our so ostentatious embrace of Nelson Mandela himself in the period immediately after his release. Yet this is a period when the ANC needs a great deal of support if it is to keep the question of genuine democratization firmly on the South African agenda. And it is a period when - after the initial euphoria of February (the unbanning of the ANC, Mandela's release) and of Mandela's triumphal international touring - De Klerk has wound up making much of the recent running.

In contrast, the ANC, coming out of years of exile, has been slower than might have been hoped in finding its feet organizationally and sustaining domestic pressure upon De Klerk. In part such weakness reflects the fact that right wing elements - segments of the police and military

apparatuses, Inkatha, some shadowy "third force" - have, in the most brutal manner, been raining hammer blows on the ANC and its allies. But it also reflects the difficulty the organization has had in making the transition from the long years of political exile to the novel terrain of open political mobilization.

In consequence, it seems ever more likely that the ANC, while remaining a key actor in the process, will be forced to make significant concessions in whatever substantive negotiations may now be forthcoming. The ANC has demanded, perfectly legitimately, that the established white government be removed from the centre of the constitution-making process and that the establishment of an interim government and the free election of a new,



*Nelson Mandela meets Canada's Brian Mulroney, 1990*

nation-wide constituent assembly be necessary attributes of the transition to a democratic South Africa. Has it now any likely prospect of realizing that demand, or, indeed, of realizing a constitutional arrangement that will be free of the jiggery-pokery – the whole gamut of second chambers, special majorities, reserve clauses and the like now being discussed in National Party circles – felt necessary by the established powers in South Africa in order to safeguard their own vested interests? Unfortunately, one can no longer be very confident that there will a positive answer to these questions.

Yet far from being outraged with this trend of events the Canadian government seems to be, in its own quiet way, rather pleased with it. No

surprise. In the end, isn't a Canadian government that can so badly treat its own native people likely to be quite comfortable with the prospect of a process of constitution-making in South Africa that keeps a white hand firmly on the tiller? Add to this the fact that an ANC that is being weakened as a force for ensuring the full democratization of South Africa's new constitution is also being weakened as a force for ensuring any very dramatic transformation of South Africa's grimly inegalitarian socio-economic system. Yet isn't this one of the main reasons why Brian Mulroney got into the anti-apartheid game in the first place: to urge South Africa to reform before there was such a revolutionary escalation of discontent in that coun-

try as might threaten, fundamentally, western business interests (on this point see our editorial "Opportunism Knocks," *SAR*, 4, 3 (December, 1988)? Need we be surprised if the Canadian government now responds favourably to a South African invitation (mentioned in Freeman's article) to "join us in getting rich" in a (relatively) deracialized South Africa that still does business in the same old way?

\* \* \*

If Freeman is right the apparent anomaly of the Tory position on South Africa – a progressive island of policy in the sea of the party's almost uniformly right-wing approach on other fronts – will be finally and unequivocally revealed as being no real anomaly at all. What then will happen to those within Canada's anti-apartheid movement who, in the past few years, have urged a "less combative," more collaborative approach towards the Canadian government? No doubt some of them will continue to pull away from the more left-wing forces within that movement, either abandoning Southern African work altogether ("the anti-apartheid struggle is over, isn't it?") or cosying up still more comfortably to the Canadian government.

Many in the NGO sector will have more conscience, and will try to straddle, as best they can, the many dilemmas inherent in their position: they will avail themselves of the opportunity to use Canadian government money for various "good purposes" – the Canadian government does, in fact, support some worthy, if modest, projects on the ground in South Africa, as Freeman also notes – while aware of the increasing bankruptcy of that gov-

ernment's overall posture towards change in South Africa. Meanwhile, more flexibly enconced in the lofty independence afforded by their penury, southern African liberation support groups will have their work cut out for them in trying to explain to the Canadian people just what is really happening in the ever less straightforward struggle for a just South Africa.

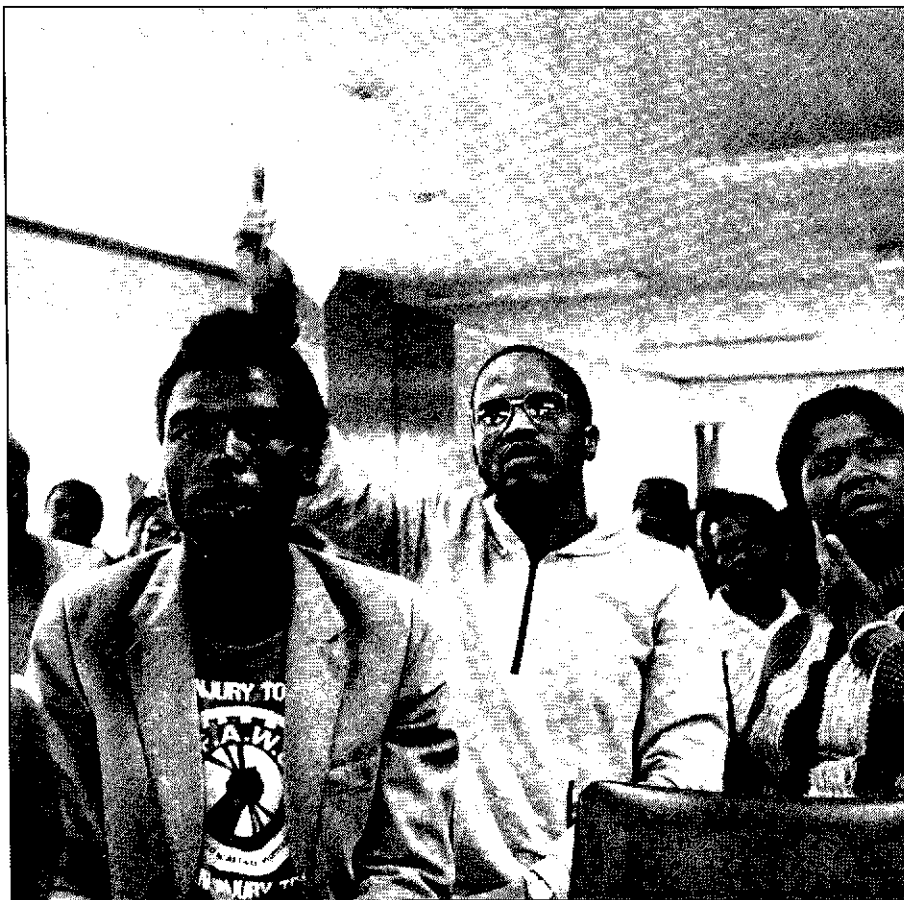
The left-wing of the anti-apartheid movement will also have plenty to debate about in its own terms, of course. The imperative of helping build up the ANC the better to confront the De Klerk government asserts itself. Yet we are also drawn, as Nancy Thede suggests in her article on recent debates in Canada, to diversify our support in South Africa – the better to strengthen the kind of vibrant “civil society” there that could prove to be a democratic check upon even some future ANC government if such a government should itself lapse into authoritarian practices. There are ambiguities here (Mala Singh's article in this issue of *SAR* is instructive on some of these) and many issues both to debate and to organize educational campaigns around.

There is one additional, albeit related, conundrum that surfaces in this number of *SAR*, perhaps the most complicated one of all. For Mike Morris, in his article “Why are Anti-Stalinists entering the SACP?”, documents the ironic plight of many in South Africa, especially in the trade union movement, who see (pace Mulrone) the necessity of a democratic socialist outcome there if people are really to be free. Yet, as he spells out their position, they despair of the ANC – whatever its other merits – becoming a very certain vehicle of such a project. Increasingly, in search of

an effective instrument of socialist endeavour, they have begun to enter the party towards which many of them have harboured suspicions for years: the South African Communist Party. They see, on the one hand, the SACP as being sufficiently close to the ANC to have real influence; they hope, on the other hand, that the SACP itself has become sufficiently de-Stalinized to play a genuinely democratic and progressive role.

We leave the further exploration of this surprising phenomenon to Morris' article. We will have to return to the question of the SACP – perhaps the only communist party in the world that is growing rapidly in numbers and influence – in future issues. But what if the “anti-

Stalinists” in the union movement should prove to be correct and the SACP should reveal itself to be the most promising agent – more promising than the ANC – for keeping a left agenda and a transformative socio-economic agenda alive in South Africa. Most of us on the left of the anti-apartheid movement have been no more comfortable, over the years, with the Stalinism of the SACP than have the militants of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa. Must we, like them, begin to think the unthinkable? A tough question, but there is one consolation. At least this time Brian Mulrone is unlikely to cloud the issue by rushing to embrace the South African Communist Party on our behalf!



*FAWU delegates, August 1986*

Hartman

# Getting Rich Together

## Canada and South Africa 1990

BY LINDA FREEMAN

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

In South Africa and in Canada what a year it has been. Mandela free and also a guest in Canada addressing a joint session of Parliament followed by a tumultuous standing ovation. Clark rushing to Lusaka to greet Mandela on his first trip outside South Africa, the only member of a western government to do so.

These are the snapshots which started this year and here are some to end it: Mac Maharaj, one of Mandela's senior lieutenants, detained, tortured and hospitalized in South Africa, the indemnity of ANC cadres removed at whim by the state. Renamo style bandits, the mysterious "third force" trained by South Africa's security forces, shooting people on the beach in Durban and turning commuter trains to Johannesburg into slaughter houses. State security forces arming, transporting and organizing Inkatha attacks in Natal and elsewhere, standing by as the killings proceed.

What seems to be emerging from the South African state is a two track policy reminiscent of P. W. Botha's signing of the Nkomati agreement with the late President Samora Machel of Mozambique at the same time as one of his ministers was meeting with the rebel force Renamo. Promoting constant unrest in the townships scatters the ANC's focus and prevents grass roots organization. Meanwhile, keeping aloft the banner of reform in international circles eases the pressures of sanctions and encourages international capital to return. The international community is again being encouraged to think

of the South African state as divided amongst itself, needing Western support for that part which is purportedly not involved in promoting violence.

### The international agenda

While a fierce debate has ensued concerning the intentions of the South African state, there is no question that a South African settlement remains on the agenda of both local and international forces. Continued sanctions are the lever which the international community is using to make the De Klerk government proceed. On the list of expected reforms are the repeal of the Group Areas Act and Land Act, progress in meaningful negotiations and the fulfillment of the Pretoria Minute. The product of the second meeting between the ANC and the state in August, the Pretoria Minute dealt primarily with the repeal of key sections of the Internal Security Act, the unconditional release of political prisoners, the granting of indemnity and the phased return of exiles.

At the same time, most countries, including Canada, have made absolutely clear to the ANC that once these reforms are in place, sanctions will be lifted, probably in late spring 1991. The ANC has been set adrift, told to cut its losses and to accept a compromise.

At this stage, barring the wild card of a right wing military coup, the question is much more when the next measures will be taken so that international sanctions can be lifted rather than whether De Klerk is or is not planning to move forward. At the end of 1990 an international consensus seems to have materialized to see the process through, no matter what flaws and imperfections, a de-

termination reminiscent of the push for an independent Namibia.

Once again the process unfolds in the meeting rooms above, while in the basement a charnel house of brutality continues as the South African state attempts to use its preponderant power to weaken the ANC and keep it off balance, beating its supporters bloody when it has the opportunity. Concern is mounting at the grass roots and among the youth at the ANC's inability to regain the initiative, to defend its people, let alone operate in a more democratic and effective fashion. In destabilizing black South Africa, De Klerk's government wants the ANC to come to the negotiating table battered and weak, with the black community divided and vulnerable to strategies to retain white privilege.

In this conjuncture, we exist in two moments at once, with the battle to end apartheid not over, and yet the struggle for a genuinely democratic polity and egalitarian socio-economic process at hand. What seems to be emerging is an attempt to stage manage a settlement which will compromise the substance of the first struggle and deny the aspirations of the second entirely.

### Where is Canada?

In this difficult, extremely complex and fluid situation, where is Canada? In the early part of the year, it seemed that the state was standing firm. After De Klerk's gestures in February, the Canadian government did not accept the position of Britain or the right wing press in Canada which predictably urged the immediate end to sanctions. Instead, Clark and Mulroney made

clear that Canada would maintain existing sanctions until there was clear evidence of irreversible change in the apartheid system and meaningful constitutional negotiations. Mulroney even pledged that he would take his cue from Mandela, a promise that alienated that part of his party and constituency which continues to support Gatsha Buthelezi. While there were no ad-

Africa which pushed for additional sanctions, talking repeatedly about "sanctions fatigue." While total two-way trade between Canada and South Africa was down twenty per cent in 1989 over the pre-sanctions year of 1985, Canadian imports had climbed steadily back to almost pre-sanctions levels - \$206 million in 1989 compared to \$228 million in 1985. (The 1986 figures are mislead-

he not only promised to implement full economic and diplomatic sanctions and adopted some concrete sanctions, but also personally confronted British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the issue in the Commonwealth. There has been warm praise and thanks not only from Mandela shortly after his release but also from Southern African leaders like Kaunda and Mugabe.



Canadian External Affairs Minister, Joe Clark, and Winnie Mandela lead Toronto event, 1990

ditional measures implied in these policies, at least the government held the line.

In fact, holding the line has been Canada's policy on South Africa since mid-1987 - an approach which seemed timid and duplicitous before February. Only a year ago, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, played an instrumental role in blocking those forces within the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern

ing as Canadian capital built up imports in anticipation of sanctions.) Voluntary financial sanctions meant that the Bank of Nova Scotia was able, with impunity, to offer a \$600 million loan to a subsidiary of South Africa's largest conglomerate, Anglo American.

Yet, this three year hiatus has largely been ignored at home and abroad. Mulroney's government has been able to coast on the reputation earned in 1985 and 1986 when

In Lusaka, Kaunda called Canada a front line state while Mugabe paid special tribute to Mulroney's role in the Commonwealth while on a state visit to Canada in September.

In 1990, the rather limp nature of Canadian policy has also been forgotten at home in an orgy of self-congratulation. Both Clark and Mulroney moved quickly to claim credit for South Africa's decision to launch reforms. They argued that initiatives of the Depart-

ment of External Affairs, including a call addressed to the ANC in Lusaka to abandon the armed struggle, had encouraged "moderation" in the ANC's position. In the months following Mandela's release, strong pressure was exerted by External Affairs to ensure that Canada was included in Mandela's travel plans in June.

### Supping with a long spoon

Yet however much the Canadian government was keen to be part of Mandela's first period of freedom and to treat him as a virtual head of state, its relationship to the ANC continues to be full of ambiguities and cross currents. While welcoming Mandela with great ceremony, it was not prepared to provide the material assistance for the ANC's political work which Mandela requested.

In the past, the government kept its distance from the ANC partly because of the movement's commitment to armed struggle. In addition, there was considerable unease about the ANC's socialist bent and its unrepentant alliance with the South African Communist party. While the end of the Cold War and the ANC's commitment to suspend the armed struggle have removed some of the constraints on official support, the government still refuses to provide significant direct assistance. Now the argument is that there is an all-party policy in Canada not to provide assistance to political parties in other countries.

Mandela and other ANC leaders reject the contention that, at this stage, the ANC is simply a political party like any other. This summer in New York, he argued that the ANC should be seen primarily as an umbrella organization for the majority who oppose apartheid. He said,

*Many people regarded us as a political party pure and simple, and they refused to assist because of this approach. In fact, we have never been a political party. We have always been a political organization. We have always been a parliament*

*of the black people in this country where from different walks of life and with different political affiliations are members of the organization joined only by the determination to oppose racial oppression.*

There is certainly a case to be made for the special needs of the ANC as a liberation movement in this crucial period. At the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Committee meeting in Abuja in May, even Clark recognized the comparative disadvantage faced by the ANC and others in negotiations. He noted that "the white community remains in full control of the government and the private sector, with its attendant organization, financial and manpower resources." His response was to offer \$1.8 million to help all political parties have the resources to bargain at less of a disadvantage.

However, almost nothing has been offered directly to the ANC. Following Mandela's release, External Affairs commissioned an official of Oxfam Canada to find acceptable projects which, to date, are still at the planning stage. Also, a highlight of Mandela's visit to Canada in June was Mulroney's offer of \$5 million to assist in the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and political prisoners, bumped up to nearly \$6 million by Mandela's adroit "assumption" that Mulroney meant U.S. dollars.

Yet, as the ANC soon discovered, the Canadian government had no intention of letting the ANC organization inside South Africa manage the programme. Instead the funds for repatriation are to be channeled through the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and for resettlement through the churches and the National Co-ordinating Committee on the Return of Exiles. Although in the ANC's view, the UNHCR budgets an inordinate share for itself in administrative costs, it eventually conceded the point. To date, little more than \$100,000 has been disbursed but Canadian officials are optimistic that repatriation

will be concluded by April 1991 and disbursements for resettlement concluded by the summer.

In tried and true Tory fashion, the government has attempted to pass the buck on direct assistance to the ANC to individual Canadians. This approach has been used by Clark before. In 1985, he tried to avoid sanctions at first by suggesting that individual Canadians from the banks and the private sector could work more effectively than the state to promote change and dialogue inside South Africa. Again the emphasis on the individual can be seen in the government's establishment of registers in Canada of all private and group anti-apartheid actions which ultimately went to the United Nations. Now, rather than provide official assistance to the ANC, Clark has promoted a Mandela Fund for private donations, an initiative which, by dint of poor organization, has raised a mere \$100,000 as compared to the goal of \$20 million mentioned by Clark in March.

Not only has the Canadian government maintained some critical distance in terms of assistance, but officials have also told the ANC that Canada will not retain sanctions once the momentum to lift them begins. Instead, they look forward to the time when Canada will become "not only a trading partner but a privileged trading partner," sending in missions to promote trade, loans and equity investment.

In the past, official Canada has faced some disadvantages from this combination of arms-length neutrality before independence followed by cuddly, trade accented diplomacy later. In every single case in Southern Africa, official Canada kept a chilly distance from liberation movements while they were struggling to become free of colonial rule and refused them help when it was desperately needed - whether it was FRELIMO in Mozambique, MPLA in Angola, ZANU/ZAPU in Zimbabwe or SWAPO in Namibia. Re-



peatedly, Canadian officials refused to learn the historical lesson, expressing instead considerable ambivalence about the claims of these organizations to mass support and doubt about their success in ending colonial rule. Not surprisingly, after independence, it took some hard leg work to make up for lost time once each of these liberation movements came to power.

**Strategic assistance inside**

In this case, Canada has chosen early on to counter negative reactions to its diffidence through a range of activities inside South Africa. These include high profile support for anti-apartheid activities involving attendance, it is claimed, by Canadian diplomats at every major black funeral and anti-apartheid demonstration in the past ten years. The wife of the current Ambassador has even been hosed by a water cannon and briefly detained.

More significantly, the Conservative government dramatically increased its assistance inside South Africa, spending an annual average of \$8 million in the 1980s (eight times as much on average as the Liberals). Much of this programme has been focused on black education (about \$20 million), to assist political prisoners, detainees and their families (over \$2 million annually), to counter South African propaganda and censorship (about \$1 million) and for a fund to support dialogue and negotiations between South Africans (almost \$6 million).

This last fund constitutes an imaginative attempt to support a range of social institutions under attack from the South African state, especially the alternative press. As one example, Canada provided assistance to *Vrye Weekblad*, the Afrikaner paper which broke the story of the death squads. In addition, grants have been given to promote conferences, research, professional institutes, youth organizations and cultural groups that are involved in the transition process

in building a non-apartheid future. Such assistance, though often in the form of small grants, has provided strategic support to key sections of South African society.

**Making up with white South Africa**

One other new initiative which has gone relatively unnoticed this

year has been the warmer approach which the Canadian government has adopted towards South Africa's current white government. The intention is to provide some rewards as an incentive for future changes. For the first time in years, the South African Ambassador to Canada, Hennie De Klerk, was invited



Durban, S. A., 1986

CHRISTOPHER W. HARRIS

to an External Affairs function, in this case celebrating Namibia's independence, and he has been included in informal meetings and dinners involving members of the Cabinet. On several occasions, Mulroney actually telephoned him to congratulate him on his country's steps towards dismantling apartheid.

Canadian parliamentarians also met quietly in October with a delegation organized by the South African embassy from South Africa's much discredited tricameral parliament. Among the Canadians attending were M.P.s who had taken South African sponsored trips to "see South Africa for themselves" or, like Bill Vankoughnet, have made their opposition to Mulroney's South Africa policy public. NDP M.P.s boycotted the meeting, noting the unrepresentative nature of the institutions which the South Africans represented.

An interesting indication of the new tone in Ottawa was set by Walter MacLean, Canada's Special Representative for Southern Africa and Commonwealth Affairs who chaired the meeting. In the past, MacLean has strongly supported Mulroney's anti-apartheid stance. On this occasion, however, he suggested in opening remarks that an overly rigid definition of clear and irreversible change in South Africa was not useful. In the upbeat meeting that followed, Lambert Fick, a member of South Africa's National Party and leader of the delegation, argued that reform was unstoppable, sanctions were "yesterday's story" and that Canadians should "join us in getting rich." Needless to say, reports of the involvement of state security forces in promoting violence in Natal and the townships were dismissed out of hand.

### Buying South Africa's Line

Sentiments very close to this have been expressed in the Canadian press, particularly in Canada's "national newspaper." While journalists in South Africa were writing

eyewitness stories of attacks organized by Inkatha and aided by South African security forces, *Globe and Mail* editorials consistently downplayed their political significance and emphasized the "tribal nature" of these events (*viz* "an orgy of tribal bloodletting" 24 August 1990). Not only did such analyses pander to misconceptions of "black on black violence" (18 September 1990), but they repeated uncritically the South African government's spin on these events. The conflict in the Natal area was largely between Zulus and Xhosa; only when Inkatha moved into the townships around Johannesburg in its bid to become a national organization did the struggle become overtly inter-ethnic. Other forces within Canada (witness Conrad Black's invitation to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the head of Inkatha, to visit Canada in November) have been more straightforward about their alliances than the *Globe and Mail*.

### Future agendas

Using the spectre of black violence and right wing opposition, South African officials in Canada have been quick to plead for understanding and especially the withdrawal of sanctions to strengthen De Klerk and his reform programme. While holding on to sanctions for the time being, official Canada is unlikely to do more. Indeed what seems to be on the cards is a general and implicit acceptance of De Klerk's strategy and agenda. Step one will involve some concessions on the constitutional front, managed carefully so that, post apartheid, South Africa's existing socio-economic structures remain in place. Class and not race will be the ordering principle, although existing white power and privilege will be buttressed.

Like the South African state, international capital is confident that it can derail the even mildly reformist social democratic project suggested by an ANC in power. Enormous pressure is being put on

the ANC to align its policies with the strategies of Western capital. Ranged against these forces is the fact that much of the ANC's domestic support is based on the expectation that it will be able to redress South Africa's staggering disparities in income and power, high unemployment and other historical legacies of inequality and injustice.

For reasons that should not surprise us, there is no guarantee that the Mulroney government will stand in solidarity with Mandela and the black majority on either the constitutional or the socio-economic round. When the hard bargaining ensues in South Africa next year and push comes to shove over issues like a constituent assembly or constitutional protection for whites, why should we believe that Canada will back a strong ANC position? Modest gains in negotiating the end to apartheid are likely to be pounced on as proof that all is unfolding as it should.

### The record at home

At the very least, the refusal to deal with the rights of Canada's aboriginal minority in the long summer of Meech Lake, Kahnawake, and Kanatasake opens questions about Canada's commitment to the rights of the black majority in South Africa. While Mulroney has repeatedly claimed "the high moral ground" for Canada's policy on South Africa, the record of his government in dealing with the social suffering, land claims and constitutional issues of Canada's aboriginal population has left it vulnerable to South African jibes. On a tour of Europe in May, South African President F. W. De Klerk noted that "Canada is also struggling to a certain extent with the problematic fact of having a diversified society."

Thirty years after getting the vote, aboriginal people in Canada remain politically and economically marginalized. They are grotesquely over-represented in jails, child-welfare agencies and morgues.



Santu Mofokeng/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

*Woman and children sleeping in the open after her house was demolished for rent default, Germiston, 1988*

As Stephen Hume wrote, (*Vancouver Sun*, 20 June 1990), "From Halifax to Winnipeg, Indians seek justice in Canadian courts that reek of institutionalized racism." He added, *Today, aboriginal people dwell among the debris of failed social, educational, economic and health programs. They endure sickening levels of poverty, unemployment and disease while living on the frayed margins of the richest society in history. Meanwhile, in the name of the industrial progress that enriches Canada, we strip their land of resources, force people to abandon ancient homes, devastate traditional economies and rip apart the social fabric of their communities as though they were enemies in a civil war rather than honored citizens.*

On a tour of northern Ontario native reserves in August, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South

Africa said he was "deeply distressed" by the conditions. "We have such things at home. But you still get hit between the eyes and in the solar plexus when you see such extremes of wealth and deprivation." As the head of the Assembly of First Nations George Erasmus noted, "We criticize the racism in South Africa. Why can't we deal here with the problems we criticize them for...?"

#### **The years ahead**

In the light of our own experience – not only with our aboriginal population, but also with our poor, homeless and unemployed – is there even a remote chance that the Canadian state will be sympathetic to measures which a post-apartheid South Africa government would have to take to reduce white power and privilege and meet mass needs? Much

that a South African state would have to do would be at odds with the free market emphasis of Mulroney's government, not to mention the interests of international capital with which it is aligned. There is no question that, in the years ahead, an assessment of Canada's role will have to go beyond its contribution to a non-racial political settlement to questions of economic and social policy.

The assumption within the Canadian state seems to be that, with a defanged ANC in power, the socio-economic round in South Africa can be tempered if not curtailed entirely. Thus we are left with the ironic and rather dismal reflection that, with all its flaws and lapses, Canada's contribution to the struggle against apartheid in the 1980s is likely to look much better than what's coming up in the 1990s.

# The New Moment in South Africa: What Kind of Solidarity?

BY NANCY THEDE

*Nancy Thede coordinated the SARG consultations with South African partners and organized the seminar. She collaborates regularly with CIDMAA in Montreal.*

*In September the South Africa Reference Group (SARG) - a consortium of Canadian support organizations with involvements in South Africa - arranged a seminar to discuss with South African organizations the issues arising from the substantial changes that have occurred in South Africa's political context over the past year. Representatives of the ANC International Affairs Department, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Economic Trends Group, Hout Bay Community (a squatter community struggling for its land), NADEL (the National Association of Democratic Lawyers), NAMDA (the National Medical and Dental Association), the South African Council of Churches and SPEAK (a popular feminist publication) participated in the seminar. The seminar was part of what SARG members hope will be an on-going process of consultation with South African partners on evolving strategies and priorities for support (funding, education and advocacy). It was preceded by a series of sectoral consultations and in-depth discussions with organizations inside South Africa which pointed, overwhelmingly, to a high degree of preoccupation with the part of South African partners with issues of democratizing South African society, building grassroots organizations and reinforcing civil society. The objective of the seminar was to clarify how Canadian support on these various fronts can best be oriented.*

South Africa is in a state of flux. It is a creative but also a confusing period: the parameters and strategies of the struggle for a new South Africa as it was waged only a few short months ago no longer apply; organizations do not have ready answers from past experience to apply to the new imperatives of struggle. This creates a situation in which many new questions are arising and new debates taking shape, with confrontations forming between old visions and practices and emergent new ones. Nowhere are these tendencies more vibrant and acute than amongst the country's popular organizations: unions, civic organizations, church organizations, women's groups, service groups.

No homogeneous point of view exists on the issues of the day, whether it be on negotiations, the armed struggle or the role of popular organizations *vis-à-vis* those political parties (in particular the ANC) that seek to lead the overall process of restructuring South Africa. The ANC itself is confronted with many new demands and dilemmas and does not itself have a clear and uniform position. The discussions at the SARG seminar reflected this diversity of opinion. Divided into three broad themes (the new terrain, democratizing from below, and the role of Canadian organizations) the proceedings of the seminar also introduced elements that have been largely absent from our work in Canada and that bear underlining. (The summary in the first two sections which follow draws almost exclusively on the statements of different South African participants in the seminar.)

## Facing the New Terrain

It was Dan O'Meara, UQAM professor and ANC member, who most vigorously affirmed how radical the change in the terrain of struggle in South Africa has been as a result of the recognition both by the regime and the liberation movement that neither could win a clear victory through confrontation. Yet the movement away from apartheid is not a given; nor is peaceful non-racial democracy inevitable. Certainly the De Klerk administration wants to maintain control of the transition process, O'Meara argued. It aims, on the economic level, to safeguard the free-market economy against wide-ranging nationalizations while also obtaining some guarantees of protection for Afrikaner language, culture and education. De Klerk's strategy: to give the ANC some responsibility for the process and its fall-out, thus both sharing the burden of change with it and dividing the black opposition. While De Klerk needs the ANC to help deliver peace and stability, he has little room for manoeuvre with respect to his own constituency. The challenge for the ANC will be not to abandon its minimal demands, while at the same time allowing De Klerk to appear to be delivering the goods to the whites.

What minimal demands? Here the NADEL representative underlined two fundamental facts. Noting the country's long history of intolerance and suppression of dissent, she stressed the need to develop a civil rights culture in South Africa. She did draw strength from the fact that, at present, people are continuing the struggle for their rights, on



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the ground and around concrete local issues. But she noted that inequalities have been so deeply rooted under apartheid that even formal equality may leave essential imbalances intact. A new constitution, therefore, must enshrine not only classic "bourgeois" rights and freedoms, but also second- and third-generation rights, *i.e.*, social and economic rights, the rights to peace and a safe environment, etc.

How can such a more radical programme be advanced *vis-à-vis* De Klerk? And how can the ANC itself be kept responsive to such requirements? O'Meara stressed that we are now out of the period when the ANC could claim to be "the sole and authentic representative," out of the armed struggle that imposed a certain kind of discipline and saw many issues not adequately debated. Mike Morris, from the Economic Trends Group, went further, seeing the major struggle now being one of strengthening civil society and avoiding statism – from whatever quarter this latter danger might assert itself (including from the ANC itself).

Of course, the ANC has its own problems, Morris suggested. Its local structures are weak, and will have to be rebuilt. Moreover, they will have to be built up on different bases than in the past. The internal movement has too often been uncritically euphoric, and exile traditions not always clear on democratic process. Now the political culture of coercion and insurrection must give way to a culture of democratization and national reconciliation.

The ANC representative to the seminar affirmed, in turn, that his organization is grappling with precisely these challenges, devising ways of involving grassroots organizations and ensuring accountability from the bottom up. Yet for Morris the inevitable pull on the ANC towards the centre of the political spectrum will still define for the grassroots a crucial role in pressuring each and every political organization and/or new government to tilt the balance towards redistributive social and economic policies. At the same time, despite its ability to block government schemes over the

past few years, the grassroots organizations at the base of the popular movement remain weak on the ground – with trade unions frayed by economic crisis and civic organizations battered by government declared States of Emergency. Such essential components of a diverse and relatively autonomous civil society must be reinforced, Morris concluded.

#### Democratization from below

Morris' analysis did not go untested. Some participants in the seminar consider the ANC to be the sole necessary guarantor of popular democracy and others insist, with Morris, that grassroots organizations must maintain a critical distance, no matter how supportive they feel towards the ANC and its future policies and structures.

In this latter vein the representative from the Hout Bay community reminded everyone that the living conditions of most of the population have not changed in spite of the important political changes. Some of the leadership have lost touch with the conditions of the majority,

she argued. People are continuing to fight local administrations in order to improve things, by occupying land and the like; indeed, it has been the people's persistent struggle that has led to negotiations. Now, however, South African professionals will tend to dominate the process of change. All the more reason, she insisted, why people at the grassroots need training and support to express their own concerns and interests and why foreign organizations must know, concretely, what is happening at the community level.

The ANC representative responded that his organization, with such aims as the creation of a constituent assembly based on full democratic representation, does not say that everybody should be part of ANC structures. Nor does the ANC believe that diverse party political affiliations should prevent people from participating in the new democratic process; it wants the best talents from all sectors of society to participate, not merely government leaders and ANC representatives.

Other delegates seized on this point, reinforcing the idea that the meaning of democracy was not exhausted by a consideration of whether or not the ANC has democratic structures. No matter how democratic the ANC might be, that could not be a substitute for a strong, autonomous popular movement. And yet, repeating the point made earlier, many emphasized the

problems present at the level of those organizations that comprise the popular movement. Some are eliminating themselves from the political scene because of the immense general enthusiasm for the ANC. Others are weak, with underdeveloped democratic structures and practices because of the lack of a long-standing democratic tradition in South Africa and the enormous constraints that have existed upon democratic organizing.<sup>†</sup>

### The Canadian angle

Controversial points were raised, but the debate proved no less intense as it shifted to the Canadian scene. The new phase in South Africa, with all the complexities noted above, has also aggravated certain contradictions within the anti-apartheid movement here, raising questions, previously of secondary importance, that now pose major problems. For example, what is our strategy in a situation where both the Canadian government and a large part of the population sympathetic to the elimination of apartheid now see the problem as having been, to all intents and purposes, solved? The fragile anti-apartheid alliance in Canada has developed no consensus on future strategy, nor the mechanisms necessary to facilitate discussion of such a strategy.

As Linda Freeman of Carleton University pointed out at the seminar, in the past things were simple: supporting sanctions, support-

ing the ANC. They are simple no longer. Already the Canadian government is beginning to outmanoeuvre the solidarity movement; while backing off on some of the bigger issues (see Linda Freeman's article, above), it does have an imaginative and high profile campaign of moral and material support inside South Africa. If the process of change does move forward in South Africa the Canadian solidarity movement will have to adapt as well. Of course, if the ANC forms the new government, some NGOs will take their cue more or less exclusively from the ANC. But if we have learned anything from experiences elsewhere it is that it is essential to support a wide range of popular organizations. There are bound to be real and legitimate differences of opinion inside South Africa and in such a context we cannot afford to offer uncritical support to any government or to any one organization.

In the end, despite the frankness of discussion, no clear way forward for the collectivity of Canadian organizations present at the seminar was identified. This strategic gap is, perhaps, due to the fact that Canadian organizations working in support of the democratic movement in South Africa in recent years have formed an extremely uneasy coalition, bound together by moral fervour with the underlying political views that determine divergent approaches and analyses rarely having been openly debated. Moreover,

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<sup>†</sup> This discussion was hard-hitting and, as an important sidebar to the proceedings, provoked a heated debate within the seminar that is worth noting. The question arose as to the role that those outside South Africa should take in such a controversial discussion regarding the restructuring process going on inside South Africa. The NADEL representative wondered whether it was the task of external NGOs to explore the tensions within the movement in South Africa (however creative such tensions might be) or to try to affect them (however positively). Isn't it the

responsibility of the grass-roots organizations themselves to resolve any such tensions directly with the ANC?

The response to this from the SPEAK representative was enlightening: "we come from a culture of boycott and rejection; we must learn to participate. We have to encourage diversity and flexibility. We can take criticism and questioning because we are in control of our struggle at home and debate will serve to sharpen our work. If there is to be a partnership, it must be a relationship of equality and not one of inverse

patronizing ... We can learn a lot from struggles elsewhere and we need linkages in order to do so." Indeed, most participants ultimately agreed that a political relationship of solidarity does not mean avoiding frank and open discussion or criticism - including on the level of financial accountability; a number of the South Africans urged, specifically, that funding organizations ensure that funds be used for purposes for which they were allocated, in order not to facilitate misappropriation and corruption!

the spectre of "divisionism" has haunted the solidarity movement, with any fundamental questions or criticisms about strategy and tactics quickly hushed up as being counter-revolutionary. In addition, a mythical image of the liberation struggle in South Africa itself was allowed to emerge, with the ANC being seen as a monolithic embodiment of grassroots democracy and revolutionary science. This exaggeration and the refusal to undertake discussion was aggravated both by the lack of direct contact with struggles inside the country and by the opportunism of Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) bidding for the enormous (in Canadian NGO terms) funds available for projects in Africa. It was all too tempting to grab at such funds without first developing a political understanding of the South African terrain or a politically-informed strategy.<sup>†</sup>

This is where the "new phase" in South Africa begins to force a "new phase" in Canada, of course. Our South African partners have firmly placed upon the agenda of our discussions the importance of providing support to civil society and the centrality of "critical support" within a relationship of partnership. In so doing, they have enabled us to recognize the legitimacy of divergent points of view and strategies of support. Has the need to debate such divergencies finally been recognized and the spectre of "divisionism" finally been banished?

Even if this is so, the lack of a common strategy remains. The broad anti-apartheid movement – including both solidarity organizations and NGOs – has lost much of the

cohesion and sense of direction it had during the previous phase. The mass support and mobilization generated in the 1984 to 1989 period is still latent, perhaps, but if our movement is not able to come up with new proposals in the very near future that mass base will disintegrate as well. And yet, despite the urgency of the moment, too many organizations remain complacent, tending to mistake the successes of the past for the momentum of the present while persisting in the claim that the anti-apartheid movement still holds the opportunity to take the initiative.

### The future?

What of the future? One scenario suggests that a majority of organizations in the Canadian movement may be able to hammer out a new consensus around a new strategy. Such a strategy, in line with the insistence on the centrality of strengthening civil society put forward by many of the South Africans at the SARG seminar, would recognize and promote the centrality of autonomous popular organizations in South Africa to the struggle to build a democratic society there. In this way we could hope to build long-term relationships between organizations here and in South Africa as part of a common struggle for social change. At the same time, we could also press the Canadian government to alter its policies so as to provide some of the means for sustaining such initiatives.

A less optimistic scenario would see a continuation of the complacency, opportunism, disrespect and back-biting that has characterized

the movement in the past, in spite of its successes. But this can no longer be a successful approach to mobilization. As seen, the previous phase was much clearer in its imperatives – and we also had the Mulroney government itself helping to give southern African issues a high profile. The new phase is very different: we can no longer afford to have superficial unity and, at the same time, total disunity with respect to analysis and strategy. We need to open greater space for discussion, exchange and debate, along with an overall approach of support for popular social transformation that allows for multiple initiatives based on diverse premises and rooted in different sectors of the population.

The first scenario will be more difficult to realize than the second one. Our past practices, and the weakness of the political (as distinct from the moral) consensus around the issue of South Africa, do not predispose us to such a radical transformation. Yet if we prove unable to meet the challenge, the mass support we have generated in the past will fragment and dwindle and become ever more marginal to Canadian society. Nonetheless, the SARG seminar did offer some positive signs regarding the possibility of our successfully moving on to the next phase, especially in its explicit recognition that we can and must put our political differences on the table – in order to discuss them rather than censor them as we have tended to do in the past. Now much will depend on our ability and our will to sustain the fragile momentum engendered at sessions like the SARG seminar.

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<sup>†</sup> This temptation on the part of NGOs to rush into South Africa has also created a difficult atmosphere for the South African organizations themselves, some feeling over-solicited. Indeed, much of the discussion at the seminar underscored the problem of

the distorting effect, both in South Africa and Canada itself, of too exclusive a preoccupation with funding. One point became particularly clear. There is a need for Canadian organizations to make more explicit their own expectations in their relations with South

African organizations. Do we see our role as providers of aid or do we see ourselves as a political instrument for linking social organizations working on similar problems here and in South Africa?



Hartman/Afrpix

FAWU delegate at convention, Cape Town 1986

## Why Are Anti-Stalinists Joining the SACP?

BY MIKE MORRIS

*Mike Morris, active for many years in the South African trade union movement, is currently Senior Research Fellow at the University of Natal (Durban).*

South Africa is currently a land rife with political dilemmas. De Klerk's February 2nd unbanning of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) alongside the collapse of Eastern Europe have turned the South African scene upside down. Not the least of the topsy-turvy events of these times has been the rapid movement into the SACP of a large and important grouping of leftists who have traditionally been its most implacable left wing opponents.

### Stalinism vs. the unions

Thus the emergent union movement in South Africa has provided a par-

ticularly crucial institutional base for a sizable grouping of politically articulate and organizationally astute democratic socialists. Indeed the re-emergence and consolidation of union organization amongst black workers from the 1970s on was in many respects a direct result of this new breed of left intellectuals throwing themselves into union work. Their intellectual heritage was more rooted in the new "Western Marxism" of the 1970s than in the Stalinist traditions of Russian Bolshevism, a point of reference they also shared with many leftists outside the trade unions themselves. Even more important was the nature of their entire organizational *raison d'être*: an emphasis on union autonomy, democratic structures, mass accountability and the relevance of socialism.

Over the past ten years such positions were often bitterly opposed by the SACP, the unionists themselves being regularly pilloried in a most scandalous manner in the pages of the party journals (principally *The African Communist*) as well as the publications of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). To be labelled a "workerist" by either the SACP or SACTU was to be cast among the fallen and regarded as anti-Soviet and anti-nationalist - and therefore a danger to the entire liberation movement. This, in turn, reflected the broader pattern of SACP dominance within the liberation movement, a history that has echoed with exclusions, rumour-mongering and open expulsions of those who are regarded as strolling, ideologically, beyond the political parameters laid



down by the SACP. The goal: to define what was permissible for discussion and debate quite narrowly. The result: the creation of a political and intellectual culture that embodied some of the worst characteristics of Stalinism.<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, are a substantial number of the democratic socialists so pilloried now opting to join the SACP? Opportunism? Stupidity? Naiveté? Are they crazy, historically amnesiac or brilliantly prophetic? Such speculations aside, their reasons do bear examining, principally to assess the possible success of this attempt to give fresh life to a left agenda in South Africa. Three phenomena are key to understanding this decision.

#### Unavoidable choices

Firstly, and most importantly, February 2nd opened up political space in South Africa in an extraordinary manner. It also forced political choices on everyone in the society, choices that one month before had been unthinkable. This was particularly so for the democratic left. There was now to be a shift towards the terrain of open political contestation and organization, of building mass membership and demonstrating political muscle through mechanisms that hitherto were foreign to most of the forces of opposition to apartheid. Membership in COSATU or sympathetic alignment with a particular organization or tendency or intellectual/political current was no longer adequate. The party was over; it was time to find a party! In simple terms the question for the left became one of identifying the most adequate political mechanism for organizing membership, unifying

socialist forces and expressing ideologically a left perspective.

Secondly, and almost simultaneously, the collapse of Eastern Europe had forced upon some sections of the SACP the realization that their own previous parameters of socialist endeavour were irretrievably lost and "ideological correctness" could not be policed in the same old way. The reference points had disappeared, the geographical examples that could be distorted to show a fantasy world of real, existing socialism gone, the external financial and political backing to support imposition of the old terms withdrawn. The less cynical within the SACP genuinely welcomed the opportunity to express a new direction. At the same time it would be foolish to think that this was a majority or that all those who now so fashionably express their distaste for "dictatorial socialism" felt this way as recently as last year. (Witness, for example, the 1989 adoption of the SACP's "Path to Power" which still uncritically held up Eastern Europe as the socialist success story towards which the party was historically oriented!) Nonetheless, the publication of Joe Slovo's critique of Stalinism earlier this year did signal the start of an attempt to portray the SACP as embarking upon a glasnost of its own, as being the party that could genuinely lead us, in the words of the central banner at its first open rally in Johannesburg, "forward to a democratic socialism."

Thirdly, as a result of its strong support for the ANC, the SACP had emerged from the past decades of exile and underground struggle with enormous credibility. Furthermore, the past ten years of COSATU campaigning for socialism - particularly by unions and unionists popularly regarded as being "workerist" - had shaped the consciousness of a significant stratum of workers and township youth. Aligning themselves with the national liberation struggle but with a socialist bent, the latter looked for a political organiza-

tion to orient towards. And many found it in a SACP now operating, on the new, post-February terrain, as a much more independent political force than ever before.

It was in this broad context that, following debates within the National Union of Metalworkers (and to a more limited extent within other COSATU unions), significant sections of the COSATU leadership themselves began to regard the SACP in a new light. Could the democratic left in the unions ignore the relocation of its natural constituency? True, there was irony in the fact that many of these leaders had historically been hostile to the SACP. But no other socialist party had been built. And hadn't February 2nd also forced the SACP to emerge from its secret, tight, conspiratorial mould? Henceforth it would require a mass membership and no longer be so easily controlled by a small secret clique. Might it now be more democratically controlled by its membership? Hadn't the collapse of Eastern Europe reinforced the strength of real democratic tendencies within the SACP and a reorientation away from Stalinism (witness the ferment caused within the party by Chairman Joe Slovo's pamphlet, "Has Socialism Failed")? Would this mean, in turn, a continuing and substantial critique by the party of its own past as well as the kind of structural changes in its mode of operation that would provide space for democratic socialists to create a new political home?

The on-going debate had several premises. It was better to unite the left than to divide it; an organization of established credibility could not merely be ignored; any political move of this sort would be broadly and openly canvassed within COSATU; COSATU's own independence should not be compromised; and, whatever was decided, if one couldn't operate democratically within the party one should leave. Moreover, the debate canvassed other options: to fight to turn

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<sup>1</sup> Two recent articles that underscore this point effectively are Jan Theron, "Workers control and democracy: the case of FAWU" in *South African Labour Bulletin*, 15, 3 (September, 1990) and Pallo Jordan, "The Crisis of Conscience in the SACP", *Transformation*, 11 (1990).

the ANC into a socialist organization, to form a new socialist party or to join one of the existing Trotskyist organizations.

### What is to be done?

The "socialist ANC" option had numerous problems but the major one was that there were extremely strong forces pushing the ANC to the right. The ANC, suddenly, was a respectable, open political organization vying to expand its base and unify as many sectors of the population as possible under its ambit, including sectors with no sympathy for socialist ideas. It was also necessary to come to some kind of accommodation with big capital if the ANC was to persuade white society that it promised not "economic chaos" but rather a viable option for the future. Most importantly, it became clear to many on the left that it would be a historical tragedy if the ANC could not hold the middle ground and present itself as the party of national reconciliation. To try to push the ANC into becoming a socialist organization was to flirt with civil war. Better to maintain an alliance with the ANC in order to counterbalance other tendencies and tilt the movement towards socialist perspectives - regarding redistribution, social justice, political and economic democracy, trade union and other rights of the "civil society."

The choice became, then, a left party outside the ANC. First to mind was the dream of forming a new genuinely democratic socialist party which eschewed the dictatorial currents of Marxism's own history. But the current political configuration made this too difficult: the moulds had been set by the past decades of struggle, and, in advance of some future era of disillusionment, too many commitments and alignments had already been made in the old terms. There seemed space, at best, for the fundamental shaking up of existing parties and organizations, not the creation of new ones.

As for other already existing

left groupings in opposition to the SACP, their organizations were both racked by factionalism and subject to the same vanguardist authoritarianism they vociferously denounced as Stalinist in other organizations. Even more importantly, in comparison with the SACP, their support was insignificant (and, in any case, regionally concentrated in the Western Cape). Their socialist rhetoric wasn't going to tilt the balance for unionists who already had a base in the organized working class and who now sought not more rhetoric but organizational muscle.

This left the SACP option, an increasingly plausible one for the reasons noted above. Moreover, as the SACP operated openly and recruited new members it would be subject to myriad influences - the principal issue thus becoming whether an organized left could ensure that the party took its new slogan of "democratic socialism" seriously. Was there a genuine attempt by some forces within the party (grouped principally around Slovo) to break with the Stalinist past? If so, perhaps the joining up of a substantial grouping of unionists and intellectuals with a democratic socialist background could tilt the balance, thereby ensuring a new socialist direction for the left in South Africa.

A number of issues crystallized out of this debate as being essential for those wanting to pursue this strategy: for example,

- the SACP would have to be a mass membership rather than a secret vanguard party, with probation periods and other means of manipulating membership status being dropped and with leaders being elected, publicly known and accountable

- decisions would have to be based on traditional union practices (election of representatives with mandates, etc.), a new constitution being necessary to establish proper branch structures and mechanisms of accountability

- party Holy Grails like the "Colonialism of a Special Type" formulation would have to be open to scrutiny and possible abandonment, as would the party's 1989 programme, "The Path to Power."

### Safeguarding democracy

There has not, to my knowledge, been any formal decision by an organized group to operate, in an "en-trist" fashion, as some kind of faction inside the SACP to push such a programme. Nor does the above list represent a set of principled pre-conditions all agreed to before making their individual decisions to join. It is merely that such ideas seemed to form something of a unifying discourse in the loose and open debates that preceded such decisions. Moreover, they are likely to continue to premise the practice within the party of many of those from the unions who have decided to become members.

What about left intellectuals outside the union movement? It may make good sense for unionists whose natural working class constituency is joining the SACP to follow this path under the above conditions. Other left intellectuals without that organizational base amongst the workers may feel more free to query just how much space really has been created within the SACP and how deep has been the break with Stalinism. And they may feel that they can better serve those struggling inside to transform the SACP by standing outside the organizational constraints of party issues, constantly raising the issues of the party's Stalinist past, its authoritarian structures, its opportunistic alliances, etc.

Many from the unions have already made their decision, in any case. The question is now how they are to advance their strategy. The central problem they face will be defined, precisely, by just how far the organizational break with Stalinist practices and authoritarian structures has actually gone in the



Steve Hilton-Barber/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

*Communist Party symbols in downtown Johannesburg*

SACP. The membership is not uniformly warm to a break with its past. The exile "old guard" is divided and there are many internal cadres who have not digested the full implications of the collapse of "actually existing socialism." There is, for example, sufficient evidence on the part of some of the "old guard" to be critical of Stalinism elsewhere, but whether this is matched by a willingness to admit that the SACP has been guilty of the same flagrant Stalinist behaviour is alarmingly unclear.

So far, in fact, there is a marked reticence to subject the SACP's own past structures and practices to scrutiny in order to reveal what has facilitated the party's blatantly authoritarian, intellectually stultifying and dictatorial practices. It sometimes seems as if the SACP is using the new spirit of self-criticism to direct criticism towards Eastern Europe and Russia or to the theoretical

errors of Marxism and away from itself. Asserting its virginity in such matters, the party now tells us that it had already introduced "glasnost" before Gorbachev; that the break with Stalinism had occurred as far back as 1970; that the SACP at most suffered only from a mild form of Stalinism. This is not good enough. For in demanding a thorough-going admission and analysis of past mistakes and deeply questionable practices one is not insisting upon a litany of mea culpas or seeking to exact some kind of historical retribution. Far more crucial is the fact that unless such a searching self-reflection occurs, those good comrades from the trade union movement who enter the party will be left defenseless against the authoritarian tendencies that are still very present within the SACP!

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To abandon a critique of the SACP's past, to withhold criti-

cism of its organizational structures, its alliance strategies, its silences in programmatic terms, for fear of weakening the "Slovo faction" would seriously undermine the forces within the SACP striving to bring about a genuine democratization. Unless the authoritarian political culture that the SACP has nurtured in the past is confronted and swept away in favour of a new open and democratic political culture, the South African left will still remain within a time warp - mouthing democracy and paying lip service to a new socialism while the simple hopes of ordinary people for a better and more just South Africa are sacrificed yet again. It would be tragic if the SACP followed the repetitive cycle of communist parties elsewhere, a pattern well captured in Brecht's mordant line: "the people have become disillusioned with the leaders, it is time to elect a new people."

# Double Jeopardy AIDS and Apartheid

BY TIM McCASKELL

*Tim McCaskell is a longtime activist in Toronto, with particular involvement in the gay community.*

AIDS has become a worldwide epidemic, a crisis touching all parts of the globe. In South Africa, the system of apartheid has magnified the impact and distorted the image of this crisis for the South African people. AIDS has shown the devastating structural problems that apartheid has created in public health.

Musa Zazayokwe is a public health nurse with the Johannesburg AIDS Centre of the South

African Institute for Medical Research. Simon Nkoli is an internationally known black gay activist, a founder of Gays and Lesbians of Witwatersrand (GLOW) and the Township AIDS Project in Soweto.

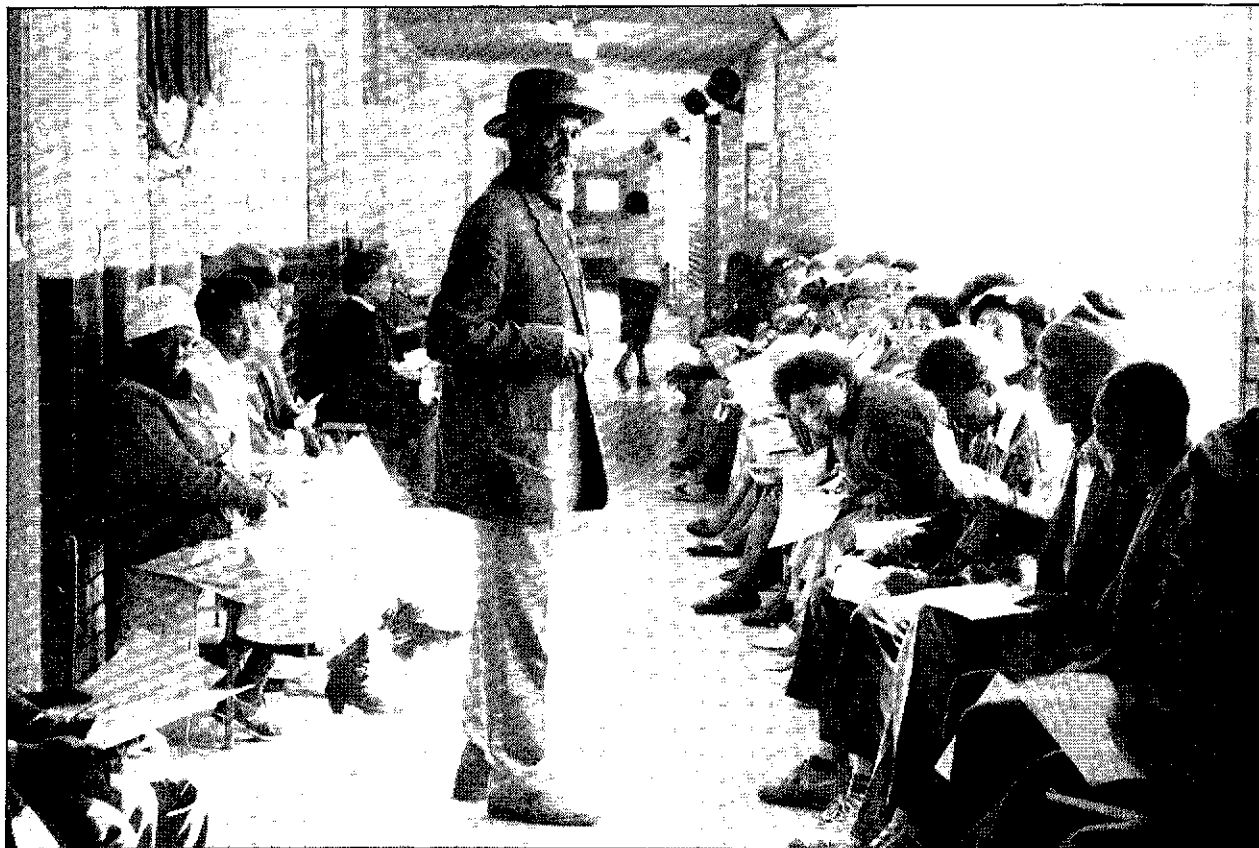
SAR brought Musa and Simon together to talk about the impact of AIDS in South Africa, and the efforts to prevent and treat it.

## Epidemiology

With its extreme divisions and inequalities, South Africa is one of the few countries in the world to experience both types of AIDS profiles — the first world type, with a large

percentage of cases among urban gay men, and the third world type, with an equal number of men and women infected and a high incidence of heterosexual transmission.

Musa explained that AIDS has affected all the recognized races in South Africa to varying degrees. *According to the available statistics, the people most affected at the moment are white gays, followed by white heterosexuals, then the coloureds and then the Indians. When I left home, there were 380 reported AIDS cases. But this doesn't give the real picture. There is a lot of underreporting for many rea-*



*Outpatients at Alexandra Health Clinic, South Africa, 1989*

Gisele Wulfsohn/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

sons. First, many black people don't use orthodox medicine. They don't go to the regular doctor for treatment since they've been made aware that there is no treatment. Traditional healers are making claims that they have cures. So the people who come forward to orthodox medicine are the white people, who for the most part are gay.

Simon also had doubts about the figures on AIDS. They say that there are about 5,000 people who are HIV positive. But most of those people have been incidentally discovered, mainly through blood donor programmes. Very few people come forward just from their own concern. And even then it would be mostly white people who do that. Without a cure and little hope of even basic medical care, people have no motivation to be tested. And on top of this, people in the gay community feel there is no real confidentiality.

So for several reasons, Musa is loath to use these statistics. People say: "So few? What are you so worried about? Lots of people have TB. Why are you investing all this money in AIDS?" As a result, the black population has been convinced that the problem hasn't really come to them.

But in fact things are different. The Sowetan reported that over 100 people are infected with AIDS at Baragwanath Hospital. And by testing for HIV in prenatal clinics, they found that about 10% of all pregnant women are testing positive in some areas.

There has never been a national survey, she continued. We don't know how much AIDS there is in South Africa. There hasn't been much government concern.

Why is the government so negligent about AIDS? wondered Simon. It's not prepared to spend money on black people. They pretend this is an issue of white homosexuals so that they don't have to do anything. I think they are saying: "Let them

die - it will help us control the population. AIDS will take care of them."

### Public Health

Good epidemiological data is the foundation of effective public health measures. If apartheid and government indifference mean that this foundation has never been laid, public health efforts are condemned to suffer accordingly.

You can't really ask about public health measures because that implies the government is doing something when in fact they're doing nothing, said Musa.

Simon added, Look at the National Advisory Committee [on AIDS]. They came up with a very frightening poster entitled "AIDS Comes to Soweto." A man is being buried and everyone is standing far away from the coffin.

Musa took exception to these scare tactics. AIDS has been made to be such a terrible disease, she said. The facts are scary enough. People need to know the advantages of knowing on time, so they'll come forward.

Looking at migrant workers, added Simon, the Advisory Committee called on the government to change immigration regulations. Now it's like in the US where people have to be tested before being employed. Everybody coming as a migrant worker from countries like Mozambique and Malawi is tested and if they are positive they can't be employed.

This policy is now being reviewed because the companies, who have to pay for the testing, haven't been finding enough positive [tests] to justify the expense. There has also been opposition from the unions, so now [instead of sending people back], they won't renew contracts. Either way it has been very counterproductive in terms of education because people say we don't have to be careful, the source of infection has been removed.

Another disastrous education campaign carried the message "Don't be a homosexual!", stating the government would not be responsible for anyone who got AIDS from being homosexual, a drug addict or a prostitute. It was really misleading, said Simon, because it gave the impression that heterosexuals couldn't get AIDS.

Then there is the problem of sex education which is still taboo even in high school, added Simon. So how can we have AIDS education without sex education?

The Advisory Committee doesn't have black people or gays on it. They are all very high up white doctors, together with the government who know absolutely nothing. I understand the Committee has now died. There was criticism and instead of rebuilding a structure they just let it die.

Simon recalled the efforts of GLOW. We have taken a lot of responsibility for the Township AIDS Project - not an easy thing. It was initiated by the Rand Gay Organization which unfortunately is no longer functioning. At the last meeting of GLOW we decided it was high time to take to the streets to tell them they haven't been doing anything. We have a responsibility to keep pressuring them. If we don't do anything, we are agreeing. We are taxpayers too.

Musa added, It's true there has never been a health structure to deal with many common diseases. But we must use the fight against AIDS to build those structures. Here in Toronto you have all sorts of organizations that can take on different aspects of the AIDS crisis, but in South Africa we are starting afresh.

Some of the pressure seems to be paying off. Even the South African government cannot be completely immobile in the face of AIDS. At the beginning of the year they finally set up some AIDS clinics, Musa pointed out. Now there is a centre funded by the government in each

province, but they are still mostly unapproachable since they are only in big cities. People are still refusing to use these services because they mistrust the government.

**Treatment**

If you can pay for it, you can get AZT, if you know a doctor who will prescribe it, Musa explained. We have a list of such doctors. There is nothing to deal with the immune system, only some treatment for specific infections. Pentamidine is available, but only through one hospital and you'd have to pay for that.

We organized quite a successful forum with about 500 traditional healers. We realized that they were making false diagnoses from the signs and symptoms. They were interested in working alongside us. But they wanted to maintain their autonomy. They don't want to give us their drugs to be tested. They were afraid that if they were shown to help, they would be taken from them and not acknowledged.

We are trying to look for a holistic method which deals with the mental, emotional and physi-

people, play with people. The National Conference for AIDS Workers and Organizations that we are setting up this fall is hoping to really set up connections.

**AIDS and Politics**

The origin of AIDS is a highly charged political issue in North America and Africa. The hypothesis that AIDS first arose in Africa has been denounced as racist by black activists and African governments who see it as yet another attempt at associating the continent with death and disease. At the same time, the association of AIDS with white, western homosexuals falls into the traditional homophobic ideology linking homosexuality with decadent imperialism. These competing mythologies open the door to many kinds of opportunism. As Simon explained, In South Africa, AIDS comes from two sources - from Africa and from the West, so people are really confused. A government minister on TV said the ANC was bringing AIDS into the country, [from those countries where they had gone to oppose the government]. So he advised people to stay away from ANC "terrorists," otherwise they may catch AIDS. People don't know what to believe.

That makes people very angry and they don't want to listen to anything about AIDS. They suspect the government. It's a way of confusing people and delaying the process. But he added, I was very pleased to see the ANC has drawn up a charter on AIDS ... they are the first organization. The ANC has also made a movie and is facilitating the upcoming National conference of AIDS workers and organizations.

Musa concluded, Because of their experiences with apartheid, many black people are very fatalistic. But I'm still hopeful. People are just beginning to realize that there is work to be done - if we can just be available to them. But it is a question of resources. A question of racing against time.



Cedric Nunn/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

"Homeland" healthcare

We are also interested in finding out about Kemron, the new alpha interferon treatment developed in Kenya.

Simon interjected, We have the case where they are subsidizing treatments for people who got AIDS through blood transfusions because those are "understandable cases," "innocent victims." So if you have money and a progressive doctor you could buy AZT, but how many black people will be able to afford AZT? None.

Referring back to traditional healers, Musa commented, Many people don't take them seriously but we think that they are important.

cal aspects to assist in maintaining the immune system until there is a cure, said Musa. We need to address what to do after infection, [not just] prevention. We have expanded our counselling and support services. But counselling is a new concept for people. And it is difficult for working people. How can they get time off work for counselling or seeing a doctor? Their employer will get suspicious.

I'm talking about real support, Simon added, not just counselling. Homes for people. In Capetown we have homes for people with AIDS. People can go to bring food, talk to

# Renamo and the Peasantry: A View from Gaza

BY OTTO ROESCH

*Otto Roesch teaches in the Anthropology Department at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, and is a member of the SAR editorial working group. He has lived and worked in Mozambique at various times since 1981.*

Over the past few years a spirited international debate has been taking place on how best to characterize Mozambique's post-independence socialist experiment and the devastating war which has dogged it almost from the outset.

On the one hand, there are those who are highly critical of Mozambique's socialist experiment and see the present conflict as essentially a civil war largely of Frelimo's own making. Frelimo's poli-

cies, they argue, have alienated the peasantry enough to transform South Africa's war of destabilization against Mozambique into a bona fide civil war and RENAMO into a genuine popular movement (see e.g. SAR Vol. 5, No. 5).

On the other hand, there are others who, while not wishing to minimize the role played by Frelimo's policies in shaping the present crisis, have resisted seeing the conflict as a civil war and have continued to see RENAMO still as an instrument of external (primarily South African) destabilization.

Being one of those in the latter camp, I have been particularly sceptical of attempts by some writers to generalize the findings

of French anthropologist Christian Geffray for Nampula Province, in northern Mozambique, to the whole of the country.

Geffray's research showed how the policies of the Mozambican government in Nampula Province, especially the forced resettlement of the rural population into communal villages after 1984, created serious contradictions between different traditional political and kinship groupings. RENAMO was able to successfully exploit these contradictions to win a measure of popular support among some factions of the peasantry. It seemed to me, however, that if Geffray's work showed anything it was that RENAMO's relative success in exploiting popular disen-



*Primary school, near Xai-Xai, Gaza Province, 1990*

Joel Chiziane/AIM

chantment with Frelimo was the result of specific social and culture-historical conditions prevailing in Nampula. It seemed unwarranted to generalize the Nampula experience in blanket fashion to all of Mozambique. Indeed, available evidence suggested that the nature of the war, and especially the nature of popular participation in it, was rather different in other parts of the country.

In an attempt to shed more light on this issue, I spent almost two months in Gaza Province in southern Mozambique this past summer finding out what I could about RE-

pula, and that on the whole RENAMO does not enjoy significant popular support anywhere in southern Mozambique. At the same time, however, I also concluded that RENAMO – whatever its origins and external character – must be seen as possessing a grass-roots social dynamic of its own inside Mozambique. This dynamic, however, is strongly ethnically rooted and more nearly predatory than “popular” in character.

### The war in Gaza Province

RENAMO activities began seriously to affect Gaza Province in late 1983.

has operated in other parts of the country. In terms of its conventional military structure, its extreme brutality towards the civilian population, its targeting of communal villages and socio-economic infrastructure, its reliance on forced recruitment (especially of children), its formal ideological opposition to socialism, its Ndaou-dominated military leadership (the Ndaou are a Shona-speaking group of central Mozambique), its continuing reliance on South Africa, etc., the war situation in Gaza confirms much of what is already known about RENAMO.

In other respects, however, the war situation in Gaza is quite different from that of northern Mozambique and sheds some new light on certain aspects of RENAMO as an organization. In keeping with other reports about the nature of RENAMO, all the evidence I was able to gather clearly suggests that as a military organization RENAMO is very much an Ndaou political project.

All my informants said that virtually all RENAMO commanders and most of the trained combatants (the “infantry” proper) in southern Mozambique were Ndaou speakers from Manica Province in central Mozambique. Though non-Ndaou peoples from southern Mozambique are also incorporated into combat units, and usually make up the bulk of those bearing arms (and certainly the bulk of the civilian population on RENAMO bases), most southern Mozambican members of RENAMO are integrated into logistical and procurement units. Their primary tasks are to transport and procure food supplies, and they engage in combat only if attacked. Ndaou serves as the official language of RENAMO bases, obliging all captives and recruits to learn Ndaou. Portuguese is unacceptable as a language of communication on RENAMO bases. The vast majority of the non-Ndaou people living on RENAMO bases in Gaza, whether these be combatants or civilians, have been kidnapped by RENAMO.



S. HOFFER PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

NAMO and the nature of the war there. I spoke to government soldiers, local militia, government officials and many peasants. I also conducted lengthy interviews with a former RENAMO military commander, who turned himself in as part of the Mozambican government’s amnesty programme, and with five women who had been kidnapped by RENAMO. Some of them had spent upwards of a year on RENAMO military bases before escaping. What I learned as a result of this research has convinced me that the war situation in Gaza Province is substantially different from that of Nam-

By 1987, the war had spread to every district of Gaza, severely crippling the province’s economy and displacing over 100,000 people from their homes. The disruption to peasant agricultural production soon created widespread food shortages affecting a further 200,000 to 300,000 people. Rural-urban migration has skyrocketed, as people continue to flee the countryside in search of some measure of security in the cities, greatly straining already overburdened urban infrastructure.

In creating this situation in Gaza, RENAMO’s *modus operandi* has been in keeping with the way it



## mozambique

Great efforts are made, and heavy psychological pressure is applied, to make the captive population forget about their former lives and to identify with RENAMO and life on its bases. All newcomers and recent captives are subject to constant surveillance. Even a simple expression of nostalgia for one's former home and family can be interpreted as a desire to flee, thus earning a severe beating or worse. Conversations of any sort are relatively few and always guarded. For the converted and non-converted alike, life on RENAMO bases is characterized by a high degree of fear and anxiety.

Material life is also very hard. Because Frelimo military pressure obliges RENAMO to shift its bases frequently, there are no permanent shelters and no agricultural or other productive activities. For its food supplies, RENAMO is almost totally dependent on what it is able to loot from the peasantry and the rural commercial network. When food is scarce, which it often is, all available supplies are channeled to RENAMO combatants. When food is abundant, adequate supplies (including meat) are given to the civilians too. Because of the heavy reliance on cattle, people on RENAMO bases often suffer from serious tick infestations.

It is an indication of the depth of the economic crisis and social breakdown that the war has brought to the rural areas of Gaza, that a certain percentage of those kidnapped by RENAMO eventually come to accept this harsh and precarious existence and give up any idea of escape. Faced with the prospect of returning to the poverty, insecurity and anomie of their former war-torn lives, the relative stability and subsistence security of the seminomadic, military life of pillage offered by RENAMO becomes preferable for many people. According to my informants, perhaps as much as 50% of the population on RENAMO bases now belongs to this category, though in relation to the total num-

ber of people kidnapped and the total population of the province they are only a very small percentage.

On all RENAMO bases, there is a rigid physical and hierarchical separation of the combatants from the civilian population. Only RENAMO commanders are allowed to bring women into the garrison area to serve as cooks and sexual partners. The rank and file combatants, on the other hand, attach themselves to particular women amongst the civilian population for sexual purposes, even though in theory they are not

the command of adult combatants. These child units are used primarily in attacks against civilian targets and in resupply missions for the bases. Aside from serving as raiding parties, they are also used to reconnoitre, herd cattle and to police the civilian population. All civilians, regardless of age or sex, serve as porters – a function of great importance in view of the frequency with which bases are moved.

Other than for some perfunctory political education of military recruits and civilians, centring on



supposed to maintain relations with civilian women.

The civilian population is made up primarily of women, old men, and very young children, older boys being promptly inducted into military training starting at the age of eight or nine years old. Though most of the children, like the adults, are kidnapped, there are an increasing number of children being born and raised on RENAMO bases.

After undergoing basic military training, older boys are integrated into separate military units under

a vague condemnation of Frelimo's "communist" policies and its abandonment of Eduardo Mondlane's ideals (Eduardo Mondlane was the first president of Frelimo), the core of RENAMO ideology on its bases is expressed in a religious idiom that is rooted in traditional African ancestor worship. The constant political propaganda refrain of the RENAMO military commanders is that the war they are waging is a "war of the spirits" – a crusade – in which Frelimo is painted as a treacherous organization that has turned its back on

African traditions and sold out to foreign ("communist") ideas. RENAMO, on the other hand, is allied with the ancestral spirits in a war to return Mozambique to its traditions and ancestral ways.

This traditional religious discourse permeates all aspects of social and military life on RENAMO bases. Traditional spirit mediums and diviners – sometimes Ndaus but more often local specialists – play a pivotal role in regulating daily life on RENAMO bases. No major decisions, and especially no military decisions, are ever undertaken without a prior consultation with the spirits. Diviners and spirit mediums are also kept busy magically protecting RENAMO bases, making them invisible to Frelimo soldiers, "vaccinating" RENAMO combatants to make them bullet proof, identifying witches amongst the civilian population and captives contemplating flight. All residents on RENAMO bases are obliged to participate on a regular basis in such religious ceremonies – ceremonies in which the ancestral spirits ideologically legitimate RENAMO's war against Frelimo.

When RENAMO wants to establish a base in a new area, it first seeks out the traditional land chiefs or their families to consult with the chief's ancestral spirits, deemed the legitimate "owners" of the land. It is in large part for this reason that Frelimo has tended to view traditional political and religious authorities as potential RENAMO collaborators. But it should be born in mind that traditional authorities often participate in the ceremonies demanded of them by RENAMO more out of fear than out of any real desire to support or collaborate with RENAMO.

The evidence from Gaza suggests that RENAMO's organizational framework tends to be less stable and centralized than once believed. In the first place, the divergence between RENAMO's official military code of conduct and

actual practice is considerable, especially on smaller bases. Local RENAMO commanders enjoy a de facto autonomy of some scope, which keeps the RENAMO central command very busy trying to hold all their commanders under some sort discipline and control. The tendency for local commanders to do as they please, to set themselves up as local warlords, independently of RENAMO central control, is quite great, especially in non-Ndaus areas where local leaders, resentful of Ndaus chauvinism, begin to emerge. The increase in the number of other 'bandit' groups operating in southern Mozambique – UNAMO (a Zambezia-based splinter of RENAMO), MONAMO (an Inhambane-based splinter of RENAMO) and at least one other Inhambane-based group whose name was unknown to my informants – suggests that the tendency for RENAMO to fission along ethnic and linguistic lines, and to give rise to parallel, regionally-based armed bands, is considerable.

In the context of Mozambique's upcoming shift to a multiparty political system, the current Frelimo leadership's concern over the emergence of regionally or ethnically based political parties is more than justified.

#### **Dynamics of the war and the role of civilians**

There can be little doubt that RENAMO's religiously-based propaganda finds considerable resonance in the consciousness of Gaza's rural people. Nonetheless, this 'war of the spirits' ideology has failed to win RENAMO any significant degree of popular support in southern Mozambique. This is in part due to the traditional fear and mistrust which southern Mozambicans have of Ndaus people, who are considered to be witches. But perhaps more important, most Frelimo political leaders are from southern Mozambique. When forced to pick between the ideologically appealing – but foreign – traditionalism of the Ndaus, and the ethnically familiar but sometimes socially dis-

ruptive policies of Frelimo, the people of southern Mozambique have tended to come down on the side of Frelimo. The fact that the worst RENAMO atrocities against civilians have happened in southern Mozambique is, I think, a result of RENAMO's recognition of its limited success in winning popular sympathies in the south of the country.

The weakness of traditional political structures in southern Mozambique has also worked against RENAMO. In contrast to Nampula Province, where traditional chiefs are still respected and can sometimes deliver significant popular support to RENAMO, traditional political authorities in southern Mozambique lost most of their following during the colonial period, making them of limited use to RENAMO. And even in Nampula, RENAMO's Ndaus chauvinism has made its alliances with local traditional leaders inherently unstable. For the extensively proletarianized rural population of southern Mozambique, moreover, resettlement into communal villages was never the serious threat to subsistence that it was for the largely peasant cash-cropping people of the north. This fact has denied RENAMO an important issue around which to mobilize popular support.

Perhaps the only civilian social sector from which RENAMO is able to draw a measure of active support is the marginalized youth. This support, however, is largely due to the acute economic crisis facing the country. Especially since the introduction of the IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programme in 1987, a certain percentage of rural youth has voluntarily joined RENAMO to try to escape unemployment and poverty. Though life in RENAMO ranks is hard and dangerous, it is also exciting, and offers access to luxury items and women on a scale hitherto impossible for rural youth.

Such young men are extremely valuable from a military point of view. They are able to guide and

direct RENAMO attacks in their home areas, pointing out village defences, Frelimo members, and the homes of migrant labourers working in South Africa, which invariably contain more food, consumer goods and money than those of other rural dwellers. For these young men, membership in RENAMO is often also a way of settling old scores with neighbours and local authorities within their home areas – with people who may have punished or humiliated them at an earlier date for petty thievery or other marginal activities.

For the rest, however, I saw little evidence of active popular support for RENAMO in the rural areas of Gaza. Indeed, the peasantry, which has born the brunt of RENAMO's violence and is tired of the war, appears to be in the process of developing its own strategy for neutralizing the threat which RENAMO has represented. This strategy uses a traditional religious discourse, consonant with RENAMO's own traditionalist ideology, against RENAMO's acts of pillage and violence.

Local spirit mediums are letting it be known that the ancestral spirits are opposed to RENAMO's acts of violence against their "children" and no longer want fighting between Frelimo and RENAMO forces in their areas. Beginning in Manjacaze District in Gaza, with the spirit of a deceased former chief known as Mungoi, this ideological strategy of peasant resistance has apparently succeeded in creating a small island of peace in Manjacaze. And as both RENAMO and Frelimo appear to be respecting the expressed wishes of the spirit, the strategy shows every sign of spreading to other areas of the province as well.

### Conclusions

Despite the brevity of this account, I think that the information presented here clearly points to substantial regional differences in the war. In contrast to the situation described by Geffray in Nampula,



Electrical worker repairs  
MNR sabotaged pylon

Antonio Muchave/AIM

RENAMO enjoys very little popular support in Gaza, or the rest of southern Mozambique, where it essentially operates as a predatory band, terrorizing and despoiling the rural population.

At the same time, RENAMO must be recognized as having taken on a local grassroots dynamic of its own that is rooted in traditional ideological discourses, a narrow Ndaue ethnic base, and the conditions of economic crisis and social breakdown which RENAMO's own actions have played a major role in fostering. Though RENAMO's traditionalist ideological discourse gives it a certain potential for mobilization in the rural areas, its ability to garner support would appear to be limited only to areas where local traditional leaders with popular followings are willing to make alliances with it.

RENAMO's Ndaue chauvinism, moreover, is undoubtedly an obstacle to winning popular support across ethnic lines. That makes its political support amongst non-Ndaue groups unreliable, as its tendency to fission along ethno-linguistic lines would suggest. Outside of Ndaue areas, RENAMO finds its natural sympathizers principally in the most marginal and victimized members of Mozambican society.

As a political movement, RENAMO would appear never to have succeeded in transcending its historical origins as an externally organized, ethnically-based instrument of destabilization. Its grassroots social character and praxis, and its tendency to degenerate into warlordism, give it more the character of a predatory band than of a bona fide popular movement. RENAMO should more properly be seen as a product of external forces which has taken on local colour than as a genuine popular movement that has acquired external sponsors.

RENAMO is a clear example of how "tradition" can be harnessed quite effectively into an imperialist project of destabilization.

# Deconstructing "Civil Society"

BY MALA SINGH

*Mala Singh, of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa, is this year a Fellow of the Southern African Research Programme at Yale University.*

It is a moment of crucial importance when political organizations and political parties that are, at present, mobilizing and building up their power bases in South Africa begin to refer to the need to develop, simultaneously, the institutions of civil society (see "Building Civil Society: Moses Mayekiso Interviewed," *SAR*, 6, 1 [July, 1990]). For, apparently, they are attempting to develop this latter notion as part of a process of reinforcing the patterns and mechanisms of democracy, both during the current phase of mobilization and for a future post-apartheid South Africa. But what exactly is intended by this use of the concept of "civil society" and what exactly are the implications of inserting the idea into political debate during this very fluid phase of South Africa's political transformation?

## The concept

Civil society? John Keane, a contemporary democratic theorist, says the following about it: "In the most abstract sense, civil society can be conceived as an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of non-state activities – economic and cultural production, household life and voluntary associations – and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures and controls upon state institutions" (*Democracy and Civil Society* [London, 1988]). In some such way, in short, the domain of civil society is usually demarcated in relation to and/or in opposition to that of the state and its administrative, judicial, military, policing and other apparatuses.

This is relatively clear, but it is also true that, historically, the term has been used for a quite a number of contradictory purposes within diverse liberal and socialist ideological discourses. For this reason we need to approach the concept with caution, carefully contextualizing it if it is to be of use to us in devising our strategies. What exactly do we mean when we refer approvingly to the building of "civil society" in South Africa?

Moses Mayekiso, in his interview, depicts "civil society" as "the population at large as it gives expression, through its own grassroots organizations, to demands that its most immediate demands be met." He juxtaposes this civil society to "the political realm inhabited by a movement-cum-party like the ANC." The building of this civil society is also suggested by Mayekiso to be integral to the eventual construction of socialism in South Africa. This, in turn, must lead to a more detailed reflection on the nature and substance of a *socialist* civil society.

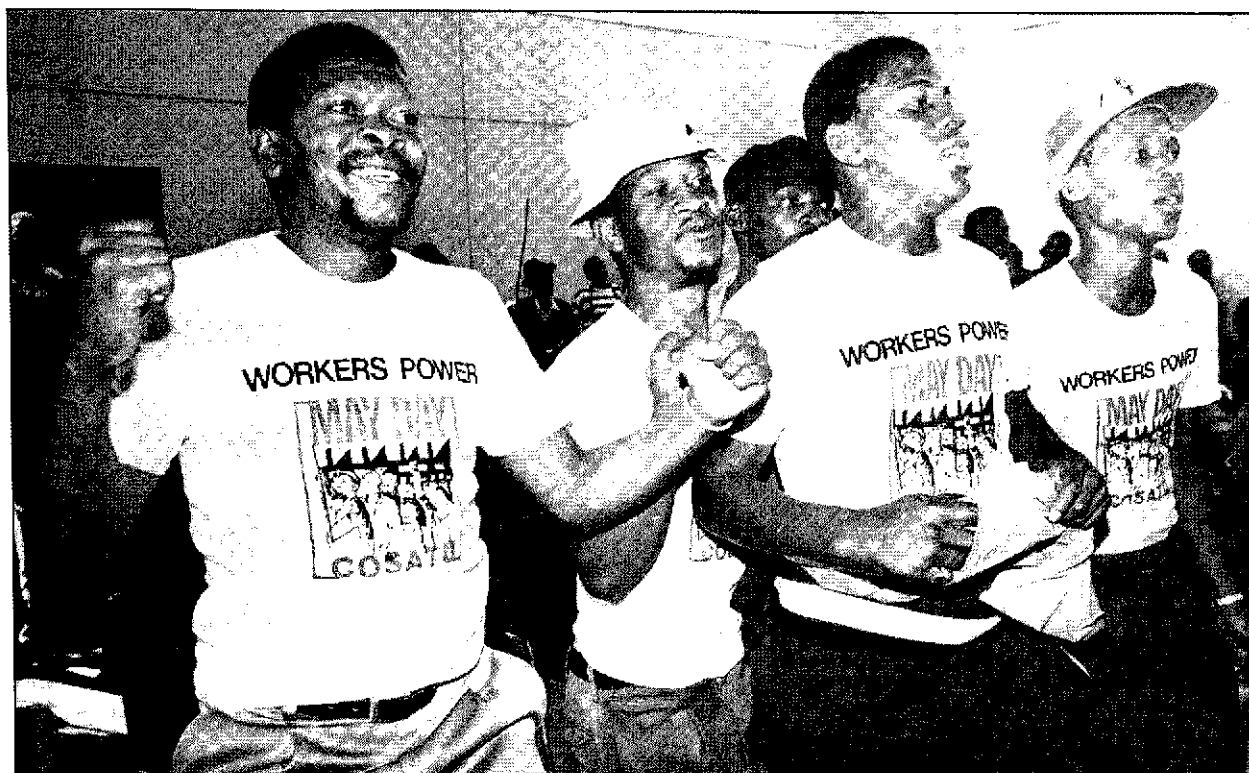
A number of historic debates are relevant here. There is Marx's own critique of "civil society" as an institution reflecting capitalist class relations. But there are also other left positions that have suggested Marx's approach to be too reductionist: here one thinks of Gramsci's reevaluation of "civil society" as being the arena for the struggle for hegemony between capitalist and socialist forces, for example, as well as more recent attempts (both predating and antedating the collapse of the Eastern European regimes) to theorize the notion of civil society as being central to the reconstruction of the socialist project. Is growing acceptance of the idea of civil society within the popular movement in South Africa in line with these latter

concerns, implying a recognition of the fact that the post-apartheid future is not going to present some automatically harmonious coincidence of interest between "the people" and its freely elected government? If so we are perhaps on our way to embracing Michel Foucault's useful insight that the "act of liberation is not sufficient to establish the practices of liberty" and to grasping the necessity that the struggle to sustain democratization be an on-going and never-ending one.

## Some ambiguities

Yet there are some ambiguities here as well. Acceptance of the notion of civil society implies recognizing both a diversity of forms of domination and a consequent diversity of resistances to domination – along the lines of gender, class, race, political creed, etc. And yet there is, simultaneously, a great need in South Africa to integrate these struggles in order to effect transformation. An urge, too, if one is committed to socialism, to underscore both the primacy of class as an analytical tool – and the primacy of the working class in the task of building socialism. There are real tensions here, in fact, that must be explored.

As noted, one of the main arguments in favour of "civil society" as depicted in both liberal and more recent social analyses is that it marks out an arena of protection for citizens against the coercive or arbitrary power of the state; highlighting the claims of civil society also helps sustain a challenge to the state's claim to monopolize decision-making in politics. Clearly, within the present-day South African context upholding the importance of civil society is a signal of ongoing resistance. For the apartheid state has largely functioned in such a way as to swallow up, suppress or liqui-



Anna Zieminski/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

date various elements of civil society. There has been a predatory assault, in South Africa, on the right and power of the majority of the citizenry to decide not only matters like the composition and goals of government but also on issues like whom to marry and associate with, where to live and worship, and what to read. The utility of the concept of an autonomous civil society as a basis for demanding freedom in such a context is self-evident.

Things are likely to be much more complicated in a post-apartheid South Africa, however. Then, in addition to asserting the importance of civil freedoms long suppressed by the apartheid state, the struggle for transformation will also require strong state interventionism in order to correct massive structural imbalances in the political and economic spheres. At that point an antagonistic model of the civil society-state relationship, thereby privileging one at the expense of the other, will be less illuminating. It

will be necessary to mediate in a much more subtle way the contradiction between necessary state intervention and control on the one hand and the need to build up a strong, vigorous and empowering civil society on the other. It will require a complex political landscape indeed to accommodate both the need for the state to function as a unifying and regulating mechanism and the need to strengthen the sphere of non-governmental decision-making!

What should be the relationship between civil society and political society, then? Certainly, a post-apartheid round of state threats to civil society in the name of social reconstruction – authoritarian decision-making from above – would not mark any great advance in the struggle for democracy. But no more would either social breakdown or the mere continuity of a largely intact social structure that upholding absolutely the autonomy of civil society against state intervention might produce. Clearly, an approach has

to be pursued that facilitates the reconciliation of state directed goals with the freedoms of civil society. In short, the need to strike an effective balance between a necessary statism and a vitally functioning civil society means there must be a profound reflection on the nature of the state under socialism. As Keane further argues, "... without a secure and independent civil society of autonomous public spheres, goals such as freedom and equality, participatory planning and community decision-making will be nothing but empty slogans, but without the protective, redistributive and conflict-mediating functions of the state, struggles to transform civil society will become ghettoized, divided and stagnant or will spawn their own, new forms of inequality and unfreedom."

#### Mayekiso's formulations

In his *SAR* interview, Mayekiso refers to the "need to work further to build and strengthen the ANC

and to deepen its own mass base." At the same time, he argues that "civil society must be built up and strengthened independently and in its own right." The latter point is clear. The variety of grass-roots organizations referred to in the interview (unions, civic associations, village committees, youth and women's organizations, etc.) form the essential building blocks of organized popular resistance to the present regime. But they must also be able, in a strong and autonomous way, to maintain the pressure for democratization on all parties - including the ANC - during the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases, and also under any new government that may be formed. Yet we must also return to the fact that the ANC (or,

purposes and agendas? How can the autonomy of the organizations of civil society be safeguarded and the appropriate relationship - that of autonomy *and* independence - be established between such organizations and the political parties (especially in the case of political parties that are likely to be represented in the government of the day). For it remains an open question as to how party activists, as they drive to win hegemony within the new political spaces that have opened up in South Africa, will actually view the idea of the integrity of civil society.

In his interview, Mayekiso makes the important point that the institutions of civil society must be able to accommodate "people from many different political tendencies." This

notion" of freedom? Which interest groups (which conceptions of "freedom") are we going to be willing to accommodate and offer the protection of civil society to in South Africa when it is obvious that not all groups are motivated by what could be described as an emancipatory interest? How, for example, will we contend with the claims of groups demanding the maintenance of their cultures and languages, especially in a situation of scarce resources?

Of course, the fact that such complexities exist does not lessen the importance of the invoking of the idea of the need to build civil society at the very moment when South Africa's liberation movement (broadly defined) is attempting to conceptualize a political understanding and a political practice that is appropriate to a changed and changing political terrain. One of the inescapable political lessons coming from Eastern Europe where a particular paradigm of socialism has been attempted and has failed is the need for participatory decision-making at all levels by the citizenry. Simultaneously, the liberation movement itself has to confront the realities attendant upon the exercise of power in a situation where there is no absolutely smooth fit between "the people" and any single political party. It is just such factors that, in different ways, catapult the idea of a real and not merely formal exercise of popular will (and the question of the institutions and organizations most appropriate to that end) into the centre of South Africa's emerging political debate. The idea of civil society is at the heart of such a debate. The note of caution we have sounded above should not be seen as blunting that fact. Rather it suggests the need to ensure that the idea of civil society be developed further in the interest of the ongoing struggle for democracy in South Africa and not be derailed or undermined through a confused or simplistic or opportunist use of it in the continuing debate.



Hartman/Afrapix

Guguletu Civil Association meeting, 1986

indeed, some other party) may well be attempting to develop overarching and integrative programmes of reconstruction that have their own kind of logic and legitimacy.

On this terrain, what kind of ground rules would Mayekiso and others suggest for sustaining the the distinction between mobilizing on behalf of civil society and mobilizing on behalf of party-specific programmes in order to check the tendency to subsume the organs and structures of civil society to party

formulation implies a recognition of the diversity of interests that are likely to seek expression in a complex developing country like South Africa. But more will need to be said about how to give effect to the principle of non-sectarianism, especially when mobilizing in the arena of civil society around fundamental issues that are felt to transcend party lines. And what of the implications of the pluralism implicit in the idea of what Keane has termed a "more complex and differentiated

# Training for Empowerment

BY SHIRLEY WALTERS

*Shirley Walters is the Director of the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa*

*Training for Empowerment, A Kit of Materials for Popular Literacy Workers Based on an Exchange Among Educators from Mozambique, Nicaragua and Brazil; by Judith Marshall, with Domingos Chigarire, Helena Francisco, Antonio Gonçalves and Leonardo Nhamumbo. Published by the National Directorate of Adult Education, Mozambique, the International Council for Adult Education and the Doris Marshall Institute, Toronto, 1990.*

Earlier this year, as part of a response to the UN declaration of 1990 as International Literacy Year, a group of students, academics and workers at the University of the Western Cape set out to raise awareness about adult illiteracy amongst the university community. We were a committee of relative strangers. One of our first actions was to organize a workshop for our own members in order to develop a common framework for understanding literacy. We decided to use the first activity from *Training for Empowerment*, a new kit of materials for literacy training that had just come into our hands. It was entitled *Knowledge: What is it? Who has it? How did they get it? Why?*

In less than two hours, amongst a group of people spanning different age, race, class and gender categories who did not know one another previously, the activity got us into posing central questions concerning the politics of literacy. It did this by having the participants draw on their own experiences, reflect on the kinds of knowledge and

skills they had acquired, on differential access to knowledge and skills, on whose knowledge is valued and whose marginalized or trivialized in a given society and why. In simple and powerful ways it became clear how our experiences of literacy have been shaped by our race, gender and class positions in South African society. In this country, until very recently, it has been difficult for many

groups to articulate publicly the impact of gender and race on power relations. The activity of the kit moved us quickly to open discussion on these issues in ways that enabled us to see the diversity of our experiences as a strength. Difference became a resource rather than a deficiency.

*Training for Empowerment* follows the journey of four Mozambi-



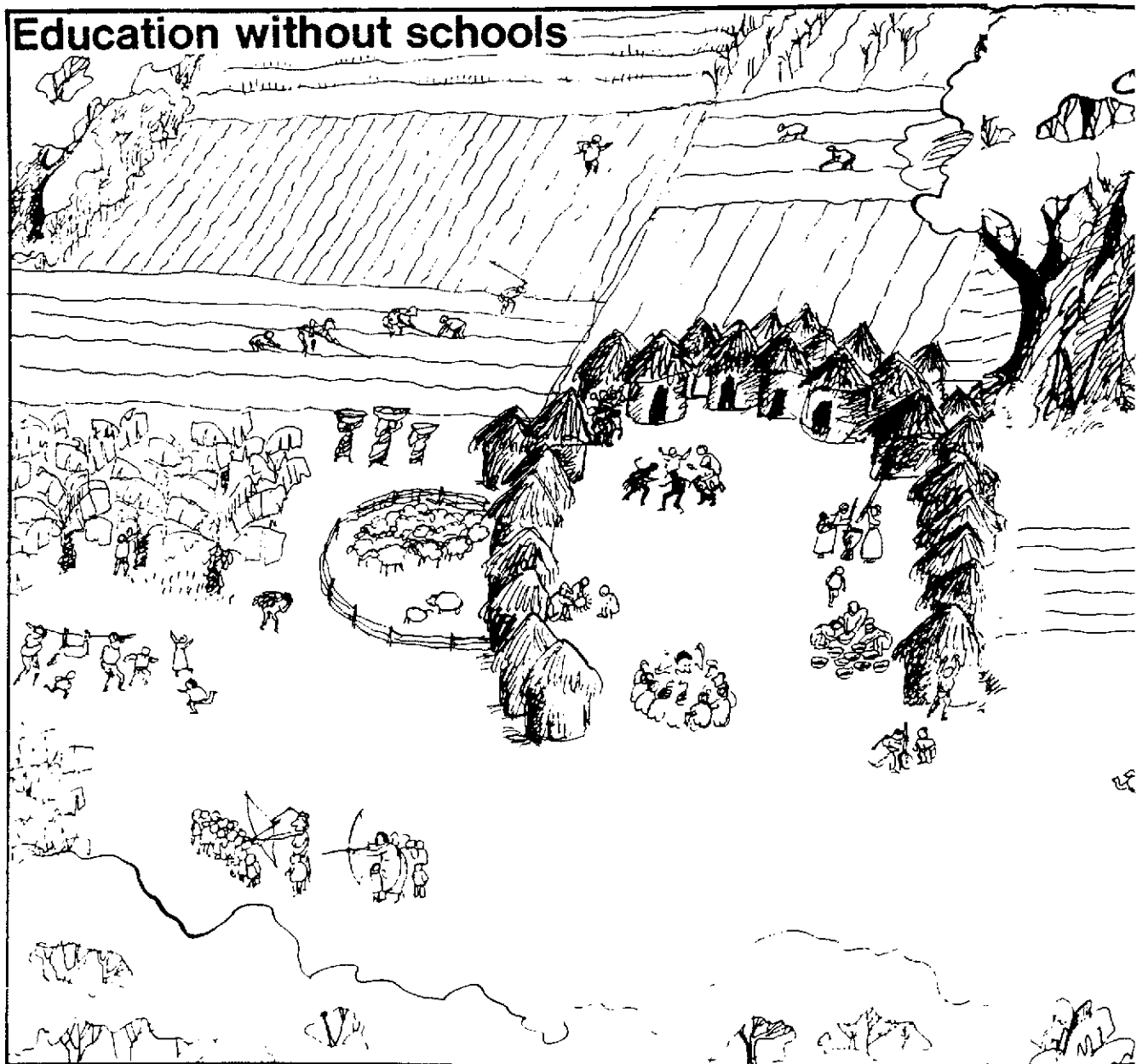
can literacy trainers to Nicaragua and Brazil in 1985. Accompanied by Canadian popular educator, Judith Marshall, who had worked with them in Mozambique in literacy training for many years, the Mozambicans made contact over a four month period with a number of popular education groups. Their report comes in kit form with a User's Guide, 3 Background Papers, 9 Ac-

tivities and Tools and a section of Resources.

The first "Background Paper" tells the story of the "South-South exchange." It is rich with direct quotes from the four instructors and their colleagues back home, some made during the trip and others as the travellers worked to put their new ideas into practice on return to

Mozambique. There are also reflection on "South-South exchanges" as an approach to staff training. Other Background Papers provide an introduction to popular education in Latin American and an overview of education in Mozambique. The section on Resources gives a brief description of the groups contacted and suggests further reading on popular education.

## Education without schools





The popular education the travellers encountered in Latin America was being done in ways that challenged the distribution of power in society. Popular educators were to be found working with subordinated groups in rural settlements and urban slums, encouraging them to articulate, analyze and act on their own situations. Literacy was a tool for organization. Liter-

acy programmes formed an integral part of broader social movements. At the heart of the debates within popular education they found questions about the role of the educator/facilitator/teacher figure and the relationships between knowledge, power and schools. The activities of the kit find ways to pose these questions within the context of training. The themes taken up in-

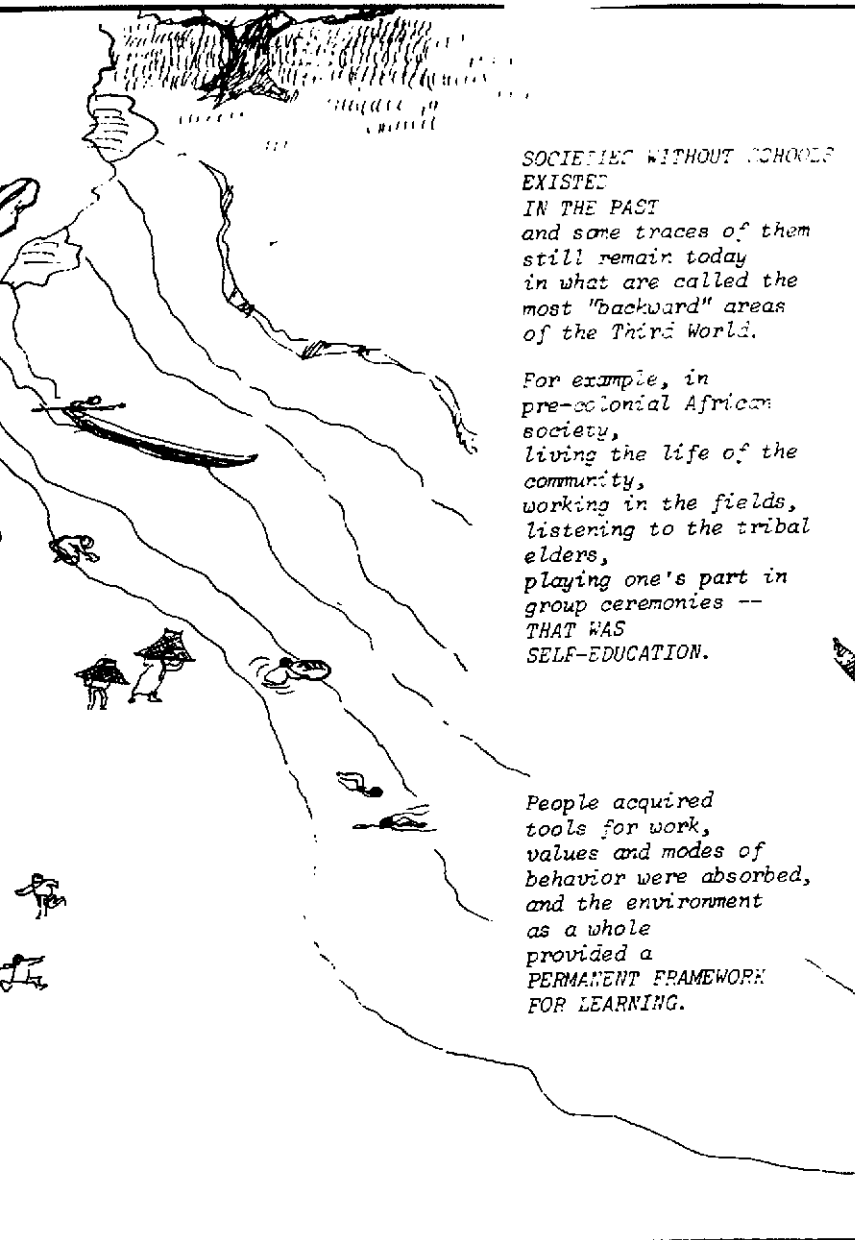
clude "Education: Transmission or Creation of Knowledge?" "Education as Learning to Ask the Right Questions" and "Generative Words - Words Leading to Social Change."

Each of the nine activities includes a vignette of one of the groups visited, describes the context of their work and offers a hands-on description of a training tool they were using. These range from role plays and games to evaluation techniques and comic books on the "popular educator" and the international debt questions.

A significant achievement of the kit is the introduction of the theory underlying the issue or process being discussed. Many "hands-on" materials present no theory. Most popular education material is either all theory or all practical application. The kit's authors have managed to introduce brief sections on the theoretical significance of each activity in a way that adds to the usefulness of the material.

The lay-out of the materials combines various innovative techniques which seize the reader's attention and stimulate the imagination, while entertaining and educating at the same time. Woven into the text are photos, comic graphics, participants' own words, handwriting and charts, resulting in a rich and textured effect. The graphics play a central role in conveying the kit's message. They accurately capture the contexts of the popular educators, and are sensitive to gender, race and culture.

The one area of central importance to popular educational practice not dealt with explicitly in the kit is the relationship between popular educators and the social movements to which they are linked. These relationships influence what educational practices are possible in a given context. Presumably the situation in Brazil in 1985 was very different from that of Nicaragua where there was, at the time, a close link between popular education and state institutions. For the users of



**SOCIETIES WITHOUT SCHOOLS EXISTED**

**IN THE PAST**  
and some traces of them still remain today in what are called the most "backward" areas of the Third World.

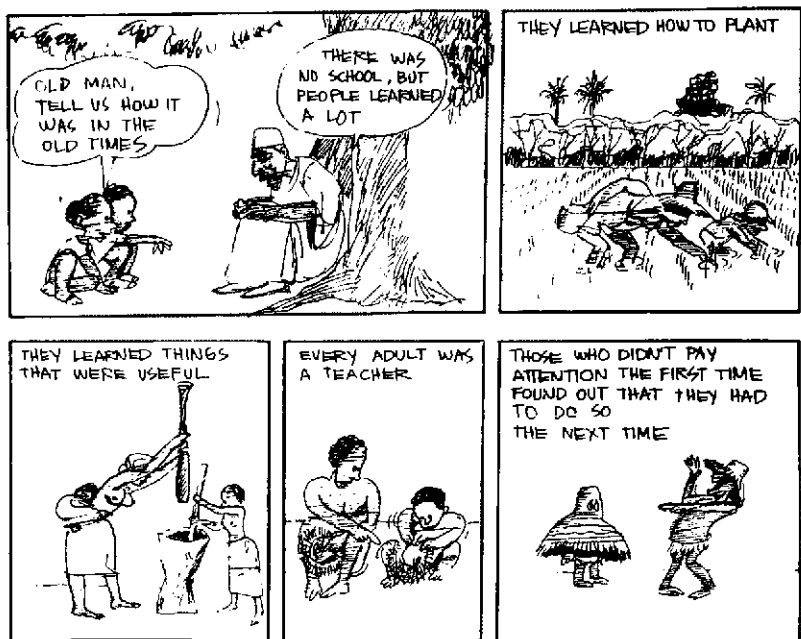
For example, in pre-colonial African society, living the life of the community, working in the fields, listening to the tribal elders, playing one's part in group ceremonies -- THAT WAS SELF-EDUCATION.

People acquired tools for work, values and modes of behavior were absorbed, and the environment as a whole provided a PERMANENT FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING.

Training for Empowerment

the kit, background to the political location of the popular organizations would have added an important dimension.

Notwithstanding this last point, I deeply admire the skill of all of the people involved in producing *Training for Empowerment*. They have recreated this educational journey with the texture, detail and precision of a Chilean tapestry. The kit will be a valuable tool for popular educators and organizers in many different parts of the world working amongst subordinated groups to educate, organize and mobilize. It will have particular significance for those located in the "South" or with linkages to educators in the "South." The kit is a rich testimony to successful solidarity work amongst educators of Africa, Latin America and Canada.



CLÁUDIO/IDAC/QUINEA BISSAU RETRIEVING BANGOR '86

## In Search of Socialism in Southern Africa

BY JONATHAN CRUSH

Jonathan Crush teaches in the Department of Geography of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

*Socialist Ideology and the Struggle for Southern Africa* by John S. Saul, Africa World Press, Trenton N. J. 1990. 199 pages

John Saul is one of Canada's most persuasive public commentators on southern African politics. As an advocate for progressive forces in the region, he is particularly adept at muting his marxism in favour of a broader discourse presumably more palatable to a liberal Canadian audience. In his writing for academic audiences, however, he is much less differential. Saul has been enormously influential in academic circles, in part because he demonstrates how a

flexible and non-dogmatic marxism can bring fresh insight to our understanding of the region. His earlier book *The Crisis in South Africa* (with Stephen Gelb) is clear testimony to that. *Socialist Ideology and the Struggle for Southern Africa*, as the title suggests, is also forthright in its deployment of marxian categories of analysis. What it shares with Saul's public persona, and distinguishes it from *Crisis*, is its overt advocacy. The most striking feature of this book is Saul's attempt to hold advocacy and critique in creative tension. This is, I suppose, the perpetual challenge for the activist academic who plays to a number of different audiences.

The five essays collected together here have all been published previously in a variety of forums, over a ten year period. I had read all of them before but was pleased to do

so again and to reconsider them as constituent parts of a coherent intellectual and practical project. I had previously read these pieces as they appeared; here the chapters are arranged thematically, rather than chronologically. This is what gives the book its unity and purpose, but one does tend to lose the sense of crumbling left optimism which accompanied a strictly chronological reading. One also misses Saul's latest thoughts on some of the countries and issues he considers. By bringing his writings within one cover, however, the publishers provide the reader the luxury of evaluating the book's effectiveness both as a work of marxian analysis and as a social document of the 1980s.

After a brief introduction, there follow two more general discursive chapters. In "The Role of Ideology in the Transition to Socialism" and

"Ideology in Africa: Decomposition and Recomposition" critique and advocacy are counterpoised. Saul picks a path through the "mine-field" of the marxist tradition. His best shots are reserved for "frozen variant" marxism of the former east European variety and various post-independence ideologies such as populism, African socialism, nationalism and liberalism. Saul's profound unease with these features of the African political landscape is self-evident and, it needs to be stressed, pre-dates the collapse of the political regimes of eastern Europe. A recent article by Michael Burawoy suggested that with the albatross of eastern Europe cleared away, creative marxist thinkers were now free not to abandon marxism but to be truly marxist. Saul advances "Afro-marxism" as a candidate.

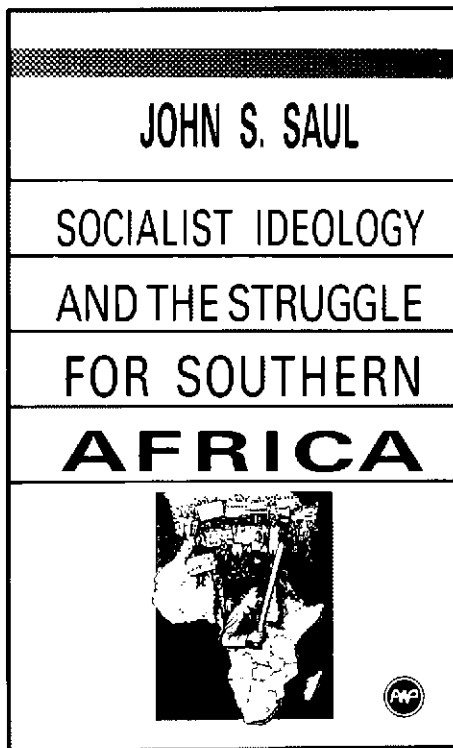
Beyond the fact that it is creative, flexible and subtle, however, it is not always clear, in theoretical terms, of what Afro-marxism actually consists. In practical terms the picture is much clearer. Saul sees the Mozambican experience as of central importance to the definition of an Africanized marxism. He mounts a sympathetic critique of Frelimo's post-independence policies, seeing in the changes of the 1980s, evidence not of vacillation and defeat but a creative marxian response to an externally dictated state of siege. It is worth stressing quite how critical Saul is of Frelimo, since I have heard him caricatured as an incurable romantic on this topic. Ultimately, however, the blame for the collapse of the Mozambican experiment is placed squarely on the shoulders of Pretoria. I have no difficulty with this argument since Mozambique would clearly be a very different place but for the ravages of this war. As recent debates in the *Southern African Review of Books* suggest, however, there is still room for a deeper analysis of

the ways in which South Africa's war of destabilization actually intersected with Frelimo policies and the conditions of production, class formation, and ethnicity within the countryside. Marxism has already demonstrated its value in analysis of Mozambique's colonial past. In Mozambique's tortured present, its analytical potential has not yet been

tion of an Afro-marxist project. In the final chapter on South Africa, Saul is more hopeful, though here too he expresses great reservations. He suggests that marxian theoretical analysis of South Africa is far more sophisticated and penetrating than anything witnessed in Zimbabwe, but that this understanding has been too often sullied by an unhealthy association with discredited practices and precepts. I suspect he may be pleased, though probably not totally convinced, by the apparent democratization of the SACP since its unbanning. He concludes with the somewhat surprising observation that sustained progressive thinking about many of the concrete policy issues relevant to "the next round" in South Africa is not very far advanced. In 1986, when the chapter was crafted, Saul, like most of us, could have had little inkling of what was coming. The events of 1990 make his observation, if true, rather troubling.

Let me finish this review with a word about the author himself who makes periodic appearances in the text - greeting and mourning old friends, dining at the Polana Hotel, developing new courses at the University in Maputo, and moving surreptitiously around South Africa in 1988. In this age of self-reflexive writing,

Saul's presence in the book as a fellow-traveller of progressive forces is not altogether unwelcome. But I feel that there is a more serious task to be undertaken in this regard, one to which the presentation of reminiscences of the "I was there" variety is not quite adequate. John Saul undoubtedly has a great deal more advice to offer scholar-activists from his personal experience. I, for one, hope that such sustained reflection on the role of the "scholar-activist" will not be too long in coming. We would all benefit were Saul to turn his considerable intellectual powers upon himself.



fully realized. One reason for this is that advocacy and analysis often seem to work in opposition to one another.

In Saul's chapter on Zimbabwe (first published in 1980), critique overshadows advocacy. This is probably because Saul has never been much of a believer in the Zimbabwean revolution. Almost alone among left commentators at the time, Saul was deeply pessimistic about the structural constraints on and the political will of the new Zimbabwean leadership. He finds little of substance in Zimbabwe which would help in the defini-

# WOMEN AND GENDER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



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