

Southern Africa **REPORT**

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Democratic Practice



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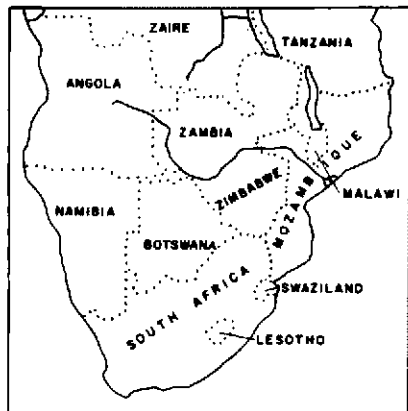
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&
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in South
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Southern Africa REPORT

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Feb. 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela leaves prison

One Year Later

"Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?" It is indeed difficult these days to think about anything beyond the gulf of horrors thrust upon us by those "boys with their toys," Messrs. Saddam, Bush and Mulroney. Not that southern Africa doesn't have more than its own fair share of horrors: a grim war grinds on in Mozambique, for example, as does the violence in South Africa's townships.

And yet horror only partly defines the present mood of those who look, through the mist of battles there and elsewhere, to parse the situation in South Africa. Equally prominent is a real if somewhat indecipherable sense of anti-climax. After all, it was only a year ago, on February 11, 1990, that Nelson Mandela walked out of Pollsmoor Prison. He was not yet a free

man: he still could not vote in the land of his birth, for example. But his release, taken together with the unbanning, a week earlier, of the African National Congress and other proscribed political organizations, heralded the apparent dawn of a new era in South Africa. Now, at last, the majority of South Africans seemed poised to make their own history — to think the previously unthinkable and to begin redressing

centuries-old inequalities, indignities and oppressions.

Some of the flavour of these new possibilities is caught, we hope, in the three articles that form the core of this issue of *SAR*. These articles explore, with rich specificity, such diverse fronts as the efforts to realize gender equality, the transformation of urban life and adult literacy. Each gives some hint of what a new South Africa might look like, of what, indeed, a new South Africa is already beginning to look like.

And yet, not quite. Unfortunately, in South Africa the future is not yet now. A familiar quote from Gramsci captures much of the essence of the moment: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears." Morbid symptoms? The township violence, of course, and the renewed aggressiveness of the security apparatus; but also such perversities as an upward-spiralling level of criminality (this latter almost inevitable, some would argue, if the lid of a repressive and deeply inegalitarian society is to be only *half* lifted!)

Half lifted? This is, in fact, the chief reason why the "interregnum" that facilitates the appearance of such "symptoms" persists. It springs directly from the half-heartedness with which the white establishment has pursued the very reform agenda it cannot otherwise avoid. This half-heartedness may arise, in part, from the fact that the white community is deeply divided over reform. Far more important, however, are the limitations inherent in De Klerk's own agenda.

True, his most recent measures (announced, at the beginning of February, just as we go to press) – the repeal of the Group Areas Act, the Land Act and, prospectively, the Population Registration Act – are impressive, themselves pretty unthinkable a year ago. At the same time they underscore just how

much of the struggle for an equitable South Africa will now have to be waged in the sphere of socio-economic transformation; in Bishop Tutu's phrase, "while the legal barriers have been removed, the real barriers remain, and poor people will remain poor." More immediately, these bold measures also underscore, by way of contrast, just how feeble have been De Klerk's initiatives in the political sphere *per se*, how tentative his steps towards a genuine democratization of South Africa. In fact, in this crucially important sphere he has emerged, increasingly, as someone too clever by half, as one who, along with his colleagues, is anxious to crib and confine the process of political change into as narrow a frame as they can possibly get away with.

Reluctantly accepting the ANC as its principle interlocutor in the political sphere, the South African state has sought, nonetheless, to weaken that movement. There has been much stalling over pre-negotiations (on such issues as prisoners and the repatriation of exiles). There has been much obvious jockeying for positions designed to narrow the democratic thrust of any novel constitution that might eventually emerge: De Klerk's recent speech rejects out-of-hand the ANC's sensible proposals for an interim government and election of a constituent assembly, for example, even as the National Party's own constitutional thinking continues to highlight the formal institutionalization of protection for "groups" and for property.

And there has also been much use of the tried and true state tactics of divide-and-rule, a stirring of the pot of violent confrontation within the black community best exemplified by the phenomenon of Gatsha Buthelezi. Thus, even if Buthelezi remains, in many respects, a self-starter with his own conservative agenda, the state's facilitating of his gruesome tactics has helped to fur-

ther blunt the effectiveness – and blur the image – of the popular movement.

In these and other ways De Klerk has quite skilfully stolen much of the initiative from the ANC over the past twelve months. But at what long-run cost? Clearly, the future would be much brighter had De Klerk chosen actively to embrace the ANC as a worthy guarantor of a more orderly progression towards a new society. Not that such subtleties mean very much to those sectors of the international community – Canada included, as Linda Freeman so carefully documented in our previous issue (December, 1990) – that are now so eager to give De Klerk the benefit of the doubt. Surely nothing can be considered even remotely "irreversible" in South Africa until real steps towards political democracy are taken. How sad, then, that countries like Canada seem increasingly willing to narrow their terms of reference regarding change in South Africa in order to give a positive evaluation of developments there – the better to rationalize any and all prospective backsliding on sanctions. (Sad, too, to compare the macho posturing of western leaders towards Saddam Hussein with the modest levels of outrage that, at any point in time, have been summoned up towards the practitioners of apartheid and state terrorism in South Africa!)

Needless to say, the anti-apartheid movement cannot be so easily assuaged. We must continue to press for the kind of democratization of South Africa that can at last permit a firm placing on the agenda of the substantive developmental issues broached in our lead articles to be placed firmly on the agenda there. And we must back those who are struggling inside South Africa to realize this end. Not that we need abandon our critical faculties in so doing. For example, there are many who would argue, in South Africa and beyond, that the ANC itself must share some of the responsibil-

ity for the relative lack of progress made since those euphoric days a year ago.

One approaches such questions gingerly. As seen, the South African terrain has remained relatively unpropitious, and the likes of De Klerk and Buthelezi have proven, on the whole, to be quite villainous. The difficulties of the ANC's moving back from thirty years of exile into the unaccustomed hurly-burly of open politics are also patent. Nor could it ever have been easy to blend into an effective political organization a popular constituency with such diverse experiences, generational and organizational. Moreover, some criticisms of the ANC will be more debatable than others. Might an olive branch to Buthelezi from the ANC in the first days after the Mandela release have preempted the subsequent escalation of violence, for example? Perhaps, but at what cost then (or now, for that matter) to the integrity of the ANC's democratic programme? And who, in any case, could have predicted the lengths to which Buthelezi and his cronies would go in order to bully their way to the bargaining table?

Could a more subtle strategy have been followed regarding international sanctions? Rather than seeing sanctions peter away (as may now be happening), perhaps the ANC could have modified its rather unrealistic call for their absolute retention and instead have positioned itself to arbitrate their phased withdrawal - linking this to a set of phased concessions on De Klerk's part. Ironically, when the ANC leadership did begin, rather belatedly, to define such a more subtle approach through Oliver Tambo's intervention at its recent national consultative conference an aroused membership forced retention (so very late in the day) of the original militant posture.

But by the time of the December national conference this particular vote was not really about the

question of sanctions, in any case. Implicitly, the vote turned around a more important and much less debatable point, one that was to arise again in other discussions in that conference. Reflecting a deep unease about the ANC's strategy and tactics since Mandela's release, the members were really voting for an across-the-board raising of the level of militancy. Had the ANC brass been so seduced into the negotiations game as to begin to forget the political realities (principally the unquenchable fact of sustained mass struggle) that had opened up that game to them in the first place? What one saw at the December meeting was, in fact, a salutary call to the movement to translate anti-climax back into renewal and to deepen the thrust of its grass-roots challenge to the state in order to return to a position of bargaining from strength. The government's response? It declared any such escalation of mass action as a breach of the spirit of negotiations - as if any very positive embrace of the process of democratization had yet been manifested by De Klerk and company!

Self-evidently the anti-apartheid movement cannot allow De Klerk to set up the story in these terms. We must affirm the legitimacy of mass mobilization and dramatic political action in South Africa (up to and including a relaunching of the armed struggle should that prove necessary). Moreover, it is precisely here that another dimension of the articles that highlight this issue reveals itself. It is true that the articles point to the future, for, as stated, it is only in a democratic South Africa that the promise they manifest can be fully realized. But in telling us about struggles that are already joined, they tell us about something more than the future. As accounts of people who are seeking to realize their full potential - as women, as township dwellers and urban activists, as those who are now empowering themselves and others through literacy - they reveal to us

the energy, springing from democratic practice, that is to be found at all levels of South African society. It is this kind of energy that must now be translated - by the ANC and by the popular movement more generally - into a more insistent and irresistible voice at the national level. It is this kind of energy that may yet make time future of time present in South Africa.

* * *

Keeping the full complexity of this new moment before the public will not be easy, of course. Already, even before the Gulf events, southern Africa was fading from the news, apartheid deemed, however prematurely, to be a dead duck. For most of the media there seems to be little incentive to give an intelligent or sympathetic account of the new subtleties of struggle in South Africa, for example. Indeed, when, occasionally, the media have acted to reveal the region one would often rather they had not (*viz.* the unholy alliance, here unmasked by Ed Dosman, of the CBC and the *Globe and Mail* in caricaturing the meaning of events in Angola). It is equally true that the new subtleties challenge supporters of southern African struggles - to be clear, to be honest, to themselves and others. Fortunately, further evidence that this challenge is beginning to be faced up to world-wide can also be found in the present issue - in accounts of recent solidarity conferences in Paris and London attended by members of the SAR Editorial Working Group.

Not that anything we write here can very much lighten the burden of the present moment. When caught in the vise of the global war machine, as we now are, it is difficult to escape a feeling of powerlessness. Still, refusing to become either "bushed" or "engulfed," we can at least emulate our South African comrades as they move to regroup "one year later" and to harness their energy for whatever struggles may now be necessary. We, too, must seek to build the future now.



Engendering the New South Africa Women and the ANC

BY LINZI MANICOM

Linzi Manicom, South African feminist and Toronto resident, has recently returned from an extended trip to South Africa.

With so many questions of social transformation vying for designation as "the burning issue of the day," what are the prospects for placing gender equality high on the agenda of the popular movement? This is admittedly not a question that pre-

occupies the vast majority in the ANC, but it is one being more and more clearly and insistently asserted by feminist and women activists. This fevered moment of policy formulation, constitutional negotiation and organizational building is seen as a critical one. What gets put in place now in the way of gender policy will shape, though in no way determine, subsequent struggles around gender relations. There is also the spectre of women's experi-

ences in other post-liberation phases — at best uneven, at worst profoundly disillusioning and tragic — hanging over the moment. The lessons to be learnt from these are valuable, though not easily achieved. If there is to be any possibility of moving beyond the merely rhetorical goal of gender equality to real, material improvements in women's lives, two things seem called for: on the one hand, the building of a strong, independent women's move-

ment that can articulate and assert the policy needs of women and, on the other, the scrutiny of all constitutional and policy proposals from a gender perspective to ensure that women do not get left out of the picture – again. How are women – and gender issues – faring on these fronts?

ANC Emancipation Statement

On paper, things look remarkably good. In May last year, the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) issued a comparatively progressive and far-reaching statement on the "Emancipation of Women in South Africa." "The experience of other societies has shown" it proclaims, "that the emancipation of women is not a by-product of a struggle for democracy, national liberation or socialism. It has to be addressed in its own right with our organization, the mass democratic movement and in the society as a whole." The statement goes on: "We have not, as yet, fully integrated women's concerns and the emancipation of women into the practice of our liberation struggle. The prevalence of patriarchal attitudes in South African society permeates our own organizations, especially at decision-making levels, and the lack of a strong mass women's organization has been to the detriment of our struggle. As a consequence the particular concerns of more than half of our people are hardly heard when we define our strategies and determine our tactics."

This document, issued as a basis for discussion, represents a real advance over previous official ANC positions on "the woman question" in three (potentially) significant ways. Firstly, there is a shift in emphasis in the way the ANC's project *vis-à-vis* women is formulated. Previously, the ANC was concerned merely with the mobilization of South African women into the organization, to take 'their rightful place in the struggle, shoulder to shoulder with their

menfolk' as we so often heard it. That women's concerns might not be completely coterminous with those of the general anti-apartheid movement, that the hierarchical gender structure of the organization and of the promised post-apartheid state might not proffer the same quality of "liberation" to women as to men, was not given much consideration. In the May statement however there is an explicit commitment to addressing women's concerns and gender oppression as a necessary part of the movement's struggle for liberation (now characterized as the achievement of a democratic, non-racial and *non-sexist* South Africa).

The second feature of the ANC statement is its understanding of gender oppression as fundamentally structuring South African society. "Gender oppression is everywhere rooted in a material base and is expressed in socio-cultural traditions and attitudes all of which are supported and perpetuated by an ideology which subordinates women. In South Africa it is institutionalized in the laws as well as the customs and practices of all our people. Within our racially and ethnically divided society, all women have a lower status than men of the same group in both law and practice. And as with racism, the disadvantages imposed on them ranges across the political, economic, social, domestic, cultural and civil sphere." Ending discrimination against women, according to the ANC policy, is not therefore a matter merely of changing sexist attitudes, but involves addressing "the material base, the legal system, the political and other institutions and the ideological and cultural underpinning of gender oppression now and in the future."

The third noteworthy point in the ANC statement is the acknowledgement of the culpability of the ANC and democratic organizations themselves in perpetuating women's oppression through their policies and practices and the firm commitment to making changes in the gen-

der organization of the movement. "We are determined to ensure that our pronouncements are consistent with our practices and that gender issues are integrated in all spheres of our movement." The document elaborates: "Patterns of discrimination and inequality are not self-correcting. Rather, they tend to replicate themselves, as those already in leading positions acquire necessary experience and confidence and appear better equipped to bear responsibility. To break this cycle we need to take affirmative action within the ANC to supplement and reinforce education and advancement programmes based on the principle of full equality." "Highest priority" will be given to facilitating women's participation in the ANC from the grassroots through to the NEC, and a concerted "national policy for the emancipation of women and the promotion of women's development" is being considered by the NEC.

This is a comprehensive and impressive agenda, its formulation the product of some hard bargaining on the part of the more feminist and democratic amongst ANC women and men as well as a deepening consciousness (and conscience) around gender issues – in some sectors of the popular movement anyway. The shifts in the leadership's position on gender is one that has taken place quite rapidly over the past couple of years. The 1987 ANC Women's Conference had recommended the appointment of a National Commission on the Emancipation of Women to monitor the position of women, but it did not come to fruition. It was the disgruntled response of a number of articulate women to the ANC's provisional Constitutional Guidelines (which circulated widely in the exile and internal movements from mid-1988) that seemed to have prompted some of the rethinking now reflected in the NEC's progressive statement. An internal ANC seminar on "Gender and the Consti-

tution" at the end of 1989 developed recommendations for including gender and women's issues in the proposed constitution. Another important input into the development of the policy was the deliberations of the Malibongwe Conference in Amsterdam in January of last year. This provided a further opportunity for women in exile, many of them significantly influenced by international women's movements and feminism, and women from within South Africa, to work towards common positions on aspects of gender politics. One significant debate that took place was around the sensitive issue of traditional cultural practices such as lobolo (bridewealth) which contradict the ideal of women's rights and sex equality under the law. (This question is resolved in the May 2nd document in the following way: "Laws, customs, traditions and practices which discriminate against women shall be held to be unconstitutional").

Policy elaborations

The social and economic implications of the ANC Emancipation statement are enormous. As we shall see, the uneven consciousness of gender issues, within the organization, suggests that there will be real difficulties in fully elaborating these differences into more specific and concrete policy. Moreover, given the incredibly strained resources that the new South African state will have to work with, it will be even more difficult to put such gender-sensitive policies into effect. Take, for instance, the economy. To address gender oppression here entails no less than redefining basic economic categories to remove their gender bias, taking account of women's unpaid labour in the home and putting in place some equitable redistribution of economic resources in ways that do not subsume women within 'the family' as recipients of benefits. But this profound rethinking of economic issues is what some women in the ANC are pushing for. At a recent workshop on Women's

Rights at the University of the Western Cape, co-sponsored by the ANC, the recommendation was made that "the value of women's labour, especially unpaid labour, should be constitutionally recognized and should be incorporated in the compilation of national statistics on wealth creation." The underlying rationale is that if women's unpaid labour is recognized and accounted for, policy can be developed that will compensate women.

Much of the ANC's discussion about gender equality and women's rights has obviously centred around questions of the constitution for post-apartheid South Africa. Two conferences in November of last year dealt with the question of how to secure women's rights in various sectors - the one mentioned above, which was organized by the ANC Gender and Constitution committee at the University of the Western Cape, and another organized by Lawyers for Human Rights. At the former, the draft ANC Bill of Rights was tabled for a gender-sensitivity testing. (Interestingly, the Canadian experience around gender and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has become a model for study by feminist South Africans. Canadian legal workers participated significantly in both these conferences, and, in preparing this article *SAR* spoke with several South African women who were in Canada specifically to gather information about gender struggles linked to the Canadian constitution).

The inclusion of a session on "gender" appears these days to be the conventional format for the many policy discussions - around issues of land, housing, health, etc. - that are taking place around the country at such an accelerated rate. Reports of these conferences however, suggest that the gender perspective, even in the more focused sessions, is very often eclipsed by the "general" and "more pressing" issues. The keynote speeches by ANC male leadership which orient

such conferences (including, often, the women's ones) do little to shift the prevailing invisibility of women's issues. And ANC women complain that they are still, too often, left out of major policy deliberations.

What is very striking about the gender policy discussions that are taking place in the popular movement at this point is the huge disparity between the sophisticated gender analysis being developed amongst some ANC leaders and intellectuals (as reflected in official statements such as the Emancipation one) and the low level of gender consciousness amongst much of the membership, both men and women. This suggests an extremely important educative role for the ANC Women's League within the ANC, and for the development of a militant women's leadership to challenge the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and practices. (The Women's League is proposing a minimum of 25% members of the National Executive Committee be women). But what position is the League in to take on the fight for women's rights and gender-awareness raising within the structures and mass membership of the ANC? Without a more widespread commitment to gender-equality, the ANC's exemplary positions on women's rights and the gender policy proposals that are emerging will remain sad historical legacies.

The ANC Women's League

The ANC Women's League was launched in Durban in August. A report in the feminist journal *Agenda* described the event in these terms: "It was hard to say what made it a women's rally. There were men speakers encouraging women, some men performers entertaining the crowd, lots of ANC fashion, drum majorettes and women doing their usual thing - cooking. There was little vision for the future role of women."

That ambiguous symbolism probably best reflected the state of

Collage of photos from the ANC Women's League Launch, Rally at Curries Fountain, 12 August 1990.



Agenda

the League at that point, the disparate and uneven nature of its constituency, and a certain ambiguity in its role. There seems to be a tension between two different understandings of what the League should be: a mass movement of women or a more cadre-like pressure group to push the ANC on gender questions? The draft constitution of the Women's League, tabled on August 9th, names both these conceptions: "to mobilize and organize South African women to participate in the liberation struggle, through their membership of the ANC," and, within the ANC, women's role is to "spearhead the emancipation of women" as well as to "promote the all round development of women and help in building their own confidence." However, amongst the membership and leadership of the ANC, both men and women, the dominant understanding of the League's primary role remains that of mobilizing women into the organization. Women who want to emphasize the League's responsibility around challenging gender subordination in the movement and in post-apartheid policy recognize that theirs is a minority view requiring ongoing assertion. How the capacities and energies of League activists will be apportioned to one or other of these tasks remains to be seen.

The Women's League, by all reports, is not yet sufficiently organized to take a strong initiative in any of its tasks. The relaunch of the League inside South Africa was organized by a task force, comprising both ANC women from exile and internal women leaders. That force, in addition to having to adjust to the changed conditions of open political organizing with few material resources at hand, also had to contend with great regional disparities in the level and focus of women's organization. In those areas like the Western and Eastern Cape where there had been strong UDF-affiliated women's organizations, ANCWL branches have

been successfully established. In other areas, League branches are struggling to establish themselves. The unilateral disbanding of some of those existing women's organizations to reconvene as ANCWL branches, was a move which left some mixed feelings amongst women activists. For on the one hand there was the precipitous loss of years of organizational-building and identity. On the other, the possibilities for using the moment of relaunching the League to redefine and refine the role of women's organization in the new era, perhaps to take on more explicit gender politics, were limited by the assumptions of the pre-existing membership and their organizational traditions. In the Transvaal, some existing women's organizations resisted disbanding, for reasons that vary – some territorial, others concerned to retain an independent organized women's voice.

As reconstituted, the Women's League is structurally more independent from the ANC than it was when in exile. Like the Youth League it is no longer a "section" of the ANC, but an autonomous women's organization under the umbrella of the ANC with the authority to have and control independent funding, and undertake decision-making within overall ANC policy. Women members of the ANC do not automatically become members of the League, as happened previously; they elect to join. The one structural link is through the head of the ANCWL who is constitutionally a member of the ANC National Executive. These changes allow for a more distinctive role for the League, for focusing more on women's issues rather than on mobilising women behind ANC goals. But it is not at all clear that all League branches would support this. There has even been debate about whether a separate ANC Women's League should exist, the argument against being supported by those who see all issues as women's issues, and those who

fear the marginalization and containment of women's issues within the League where the ANC as a whole will not feel the pressure to live up to its proclaimed gender position.

Despite the minor structural adjustments of the Women's League relationship to the ANC, it does remain "a party organization." As Frene Ginwala, a leading feminist activist within the ANC, has pointed out, the ANC is a national liberation movement, and even though, because of the pressure exerted by women, it has integrated a commitment to the emancipation of women, "being realistic we have got to accept that when it comes to the choice, either/or [national liberation or gender oppression] the decision is more than likely to fall towards national liberation." She goes on to argue that "if we are going to push for a real challenge to gender oppression and the real emancipation of women, what we need is a strong women's organization, organized around issues of concern to women ... [this] is something that we as women have to consider as very, very necessary."

Women and "civil society"

There has long been talk of forming a national women's organization outside the purview of the ANC. Since 1984 there have been calls to relaunch the Federation of South African Women as an alliance of women's groups, but the various states of emergency disrupted the attempts to do this. As recently as March of last year a meeting of UDF- and COSATU-women's groups and ANC women reiterated the decision for FEDSAW's reformation but the activity towards the relaunch of the ANC Women's League overshadowed its implementation. With the new political context, the establishment of the Women's League as a national women's organization (however weak this might currently be), the growth of feminist debate within South Africa, and the debate about independent organiza-

tion within civil society, the question of a national women's organization or alliance has to be reconsidered. There remains on the table a proposal for a national alliance of groups that would include the ANCWL, COSATU women, feminist organizations, church groups, and even the Inkatha Women's Brigade. At worst, such an alliance could merely reproduce the patterns of previous ones to become a broad front women's anti-apartheid organization. At best it could be a mass

Campaign, proposed some time ago, to be conducted by the Women's League in alliance with other central women's organizations, most notably those of COSATU. The idea was to elicit from women all over South Africa their views of the issues they want to see addressed by their future government. This Campaign could potentially provide a wonderful moment of mobilizing and political education for women around the idea of "rights," an opportunity to rehearse with a formerly si-

likely to take the form of discussion and endorsement of a provisional Charter, at Women's League branch level.

Challenges

The position on gender oppression, a vanguard one in many respects, presented by the ANC National Executive Committee last May is an extremely significant one. The NEC statement and the gender resolutions adopted at conferences and policy debates represent important victories for women, points of reference and legitimacy for the inevitable struggles for their realization that lie ahead. But, as other African national liberation experiences have shown, such victories and advances remain very vulnerable to disregard or reversal unless they are backed up by a powerful and untrammelled women's organization and also, widely endorsed and supported by a wide range of progressive forces. In the present South African context of overstretched human and material resources, expectations of quickly building a strong women's organization would be misplaced. This is so, not least because of the very divergent range of understandings around gender and women's issues. Only in the trade unions has there developed a relatively clear, though not uncontested debate, about specific issues of struggle for women workers. While it is true that there is increasing recognition within women's organizations of gender-specific issues - such as women-battering, rape, reproductive health - an understanding of the implications of gender oppression as permeating all aspects of society is not widely shared. A major challenge faces the more feminist members of the Women's League to re-educate the ANC membership itself around questions of gender, to bring more congruence between the organization's members and its gender policy statement. This would be a start towards a progressive gender reconstruction in post-apartheid South Africa.



women's movement that focused on "women's issues" (such as reproductive health, child-care, etc) which would be defined consensually and necessarily broadly, given the divergent constituency. But there is another conception that is being posed - many would argue prematurely at this stage - of a more explicitly feminist organization (although it might not be self-described that way) that would put pressure on the ANC to fulfil its commitments to gender equality. Some, such as Ginwala, see this as including the ANC Women's League; others see it as located completely independently within civil society. Such an organization does not however seem to be on the cards in the near future.

There is another plan afoot that might provide a strong mandate for the ANC Women's League itself, strengthen its hand in policy discussions and give it a clearer role definition. This is the Women's Charter

lenced constituency the possibilities of democratic participation, and also a barometer for the ANC of the demands of the national women's constituency.

It is not clear what the status of that mass Campaign is at the moment, and what resources are available to see to its thorough implementation. The Women's League is not getting much support from the ANC according to some informants, nor are the local League branches feeling well-served by the League's national leadership. A grassroots mobilizing campaign for women along the lines of the Freedom Charter is not assured. In the meantime, discussions about the Charter of Women's Rights ensue amongst intellectuals, lawyers and Women's League leaders in the constitutional and policy forums discussed above. Popular and grassroots input into the creation of a Women's Charter seems now more



Resident of Bloebombus squatter camp, Cape Town, heating drum as white Council workers bulldoze shacks

Negotiating the Post-Apartheid City

An article last year in *SAR* ("Negotiations: Dress Rehearsal in the Townships," May, 1990) suggested that mediations in the South African townships were a "dress rehearsal" for national negotiations leading to a post-apartheid state. However, evidence from a more recent visit, one that focused on the urban sector, indicates that the end of apartheid is already being negotiated piece by piece at various levels. Groups that focused on opposition politics prior to the February unbannings and Mandela's release, are now involved in discussions with the regime

on substantive policy issues. Moreover, concerns being raised in relation to housing and local government have implications for the future development of a democratic South Africa.

On August 30, following weeks of intensive, on-again, off-again negotiations, an end to the four year Soweto rent boycott was announced. The Soweto boycott was part of a larger rent boycott movement that began in 1984 in the Vaal townships. Its roots go back to struggles over the high cost of housing and urban services in the late sev-

enties. These charges became even more burdensome as urban poverty and unemployment increased in the early 1980s. The boycott spread rapidly in Soweto following the imposition of the State of Emergency in 1986.

True, there is some disagreement over how much the boycotts reflected a general rejection of the Black Local Authorities (BLAs) imposed on the townships by the national government. Even without assuming a causal link of strong political consciousness, the call to reduce high rent and service charges

imposed by unpopular and undemocratic local councils found a strong response among the urban poor. But some such broader consciousness there surely was. And the evidence also suggests how small a role intimidation played in the continuing boycott - despite the state's attempt to discredit the boycott leaders by continuously raising this bogey-man. In the midst of recent Soweto negotiations, the Transvaal Provincial Authority (TPA) was even so foolish as to place newspaper ads denouncing the alleged intimidation. The negotiations were immediately halted until the ads were withdrawn!

Negotiations

Both the process and the results of the negotiations have been extraordinary. The main actors were the TPA, acting with the authority of central government and the Soweto People's Delegation representing the civic organizations in Soweto. The SPD team was headed up by Cyril Ramaphosa, the trade unionist, his participation being in itself remarkable considering that at a June 1989 COSATU workshop on housing issues, the trade unionists present were not in favour of the community activists' strategy of negotiating with local government.

Also at the table were representatives of the Soweto City Council, which continues, increasingly unconvincingly, to claim for itself some political legitimacy, and representatives of the Diepmeadow and Dobsonville City Councils (parts of Greater Soweto) were later added, albeit as more or less an afterthought once the talks had begun. Significantly, however, observers reported that the real discussions took place between the TPA and the SPD with the various Council representatives reduced merely to grunting their assent from the sidelines. Throughout the process it was the SPD that consulted directly with Soweto residents through zone meetings, with the TPA being forced

to give implicit recognition to the emergence of this new democratic formation (and, in effect, to the decline, or end, of the BLAs).

The negotiations were in part provoked by a crisis created when ESKOM, the state controlled electricity monopoly, threatened to cut off electricity to the townships. The Councils were unable to pay electricity bills because they were not recovering anything from the residents. The TPA's interest in the process included getting revenues flowing again as it had been subsidizing township electricity payments. Just as important to the outcome was a broader sense that the time had come to get on with things. The residents of Soweto were prepared to pay reasonable charges if services were guaranteed and improved. With tensions in the townships already high due to the Inkatha-provoked violence, settling the boycott would be good for each of the two sides, both the TPA and the SPD being able to take credit.

The settlement terms surpassed the SPD's expectations:

- R399 Million (roughly Cdn. \$200 million) in arrears were immediately written off,
- an affordable rent/service charge of about R55/month per residential unit is to be paid,
- a Greater Soweto People's Fund is to be established for community development,
- 70,000 housing units owned by the Councils are to be transferred to the residents.

Perhaps more important in the medium term was the establishment of a Metropolitan Chamber "whose primary purpose will be to investigate the setting of regional, non-racial and democratic policy approaches for long term implementation at a metropolitan level." [Quote from Press Release, 30.8.90.] This body will include the parties to the negotiation and representatives of the Johannesburg City Council

which had only the day before by a vote of 32 to 7 declared Johannesburg a "free settlement area." (Although not likely to be approved immediately by the central government, this would remove formal racial barriers to choice of where to live in the City. In fact, the central government's response was that the Council action was premature since it was itself planning to soon scrap all legislation that permitted spatial segregation!)

Among other things, the Metropolitan Chamber will look into the problem of local government financing and the establishment of a common fiscal base. This responds to an issue that is crucial to restructuring the apartheid cities and towns. Historically, the townships have been strapped for funds because while they provide cheap labour for growth of the white urban areas, they have received little of the benefits: the central white areas monopolize the commercial and industrial tax base, while there is also some evidence that township residents pay more for services and in effect subsidize white areas.

Beyond Soweto

The demand for "one city, one tax base" has also been picked up by civic associations throughout the Vaal region. Delegates at a meeting of over 100 people representing ten "civics" near Witbank reported on progress in their own townships. The Black Local Authorities are collapsing everywhere, in some cases BLA members simply resigning after being requested to do so by the civics which can now operate openly. Administrators, often the town clerk of the nearby "white" town, have been appointed by the TPA and negotiations have opened up in many townships. Indeed, it is expected that the pattern of negotiation and settlement may follow that of Soweto. Moreover, there is also the beginning of an attempt to coordinate demands by encouraging the civics from various communities to work together.

Needless to say, the opening up of this kind of room for manoeuvre for the civics has created not only interesting opportunities but also novel dilemmas. Thus, one of the civics reported at the meeting that they were virtually co-administering their township with the TPA appointed administrator. This seemed to many to be too close for comfort in a context where there are not yet

any formal democratic mechanisms. Might it not also be setting a questionable precedent regarding future forms of local participation and governance?

This kind of concern found related resonance in the very animated discussion about the relationship that the civics should have with political parties, in this case the ANC since all of those in attendance

seemed to be ANC militants. Interestingly, many such militants had a difficult time accepting the recently adopted position, presented by an ANC organizer, that the civics, like the trade unions, should remain non-partisan. The organizer argued that the civics, by representing all residents on local issues, could keep the politicians honest; he also noted that ANC members, while working as individuals in the civics, would actually be attracting people to the ANC by their example of responsiveness to local concerns. Other speakers sought to reinforce this perspective by pointing out that if there were "ANC civics," there would quickly be "PAC civics," "NP civics" and so on.

This all seemed to be an unduly subtle approach to some who had spent years organizing in very difficult circumstances and now wanted to use the civics very directly to promote the ANC. Yet, whatever the outcome, it seemed very promising that the possible importance of building *independent* democratic community organizations was being debated so forcefully at this stage in the process of transformation: there has been little support for these types of organizations in the rest of Southern Africa, most being subordinated in a pretty uncritical manner to the ruling party.

The role of women

Although, my trip was too short to make any judgements about the role that women are playing in the civics, it is something that would seem to require more attention. About twenty women came to the meeting of the ten civics, but some of the civics were comprised entirely of men and, in any case, *none* of the women spoke publicly. While, on another occasion, women were very active in organizing and accompanying a visit to a shantytown area in Soweto it did seem that women might have to organize separately in order to ensure a stronger participation in broader community activities.

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Name:
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One can also signal many other challenges for the future. One of the legacies of apartheid is an enormous shortage of good quality affordable housing in urban areas. Many families share small houses owned by the Councils, while tens of thousands live in shanty areas with poor or no water, sanitation and other services. This situation can only continue to deteriorate as influx controls are abandoned and declining economic conditions in the countryside will not hold people there.

Given these conditions, there seems to be a widespread expectation that the post-apartheid state will take care of the housing problem. In part this is fuelled by the current regime's apparent spending spree on land development and housing. Large scale projects are under way to provide serviced sites for low income housing. The emphasis is on private sector involvement and the real aim may be primarily to support the development and construction industry which otherwise is feeling the impact of the deepening recession. Another objective is to buy some short term political support while getting as many people as possible tied up into the capitalist mortgage system.

This kind of current strategy may make things quite difficult for a

future democratic government. The high cost of a state-led housing strategy will not likely be immediately sustainable, given the country's already substantial external debt load. A post-apartheid South Africa will have a hard time balancing the likely demands of lenders – to squeeze government spending on education, health and housing – and the demands of its expectant constituents.

Of course, this is all the more reason why independent civic and community organizations will have a vital role to play in ensuring participatory activities that underpin the mobilization of community efforts to deal with housing problems. This will involve looking for community based alternatives to speculative private housing – options that promote objectives such as local economic development, community control and gender equality. In addition, the civics will themselves require various kinds of support in order to develop such housing programs and, more importantly, to develop the technical and organizational skills necessary to carrying out their objectives.

Fortunately, there are several small housing and planning support groups already at work. Arrayed against them, however, are very substantial state bureaucracies and the Urban Foundation, this latter estab-

lished with substantial private sector support to promote market oriented responses to urban problems. Again, a strong and vital community political base will be essential to the struggle to mount alternatives and gradually to turn state resources to meet local demands and complement local initiatives.

Some of the dynamics just mentioned will sound very familiar to Canadian housing and community activists, of course. And this, in turn, may suggest some directions solidarity and cooperation with similar groups in South Africa might take. These could include exchanges between tenants, community and cooperative housing groups to share strategies and experiences. Technical and financial resources will also be needed. Above all, political support and understanding will ensure that the process of dismantling the grim legacy of apartheid continues – in the urban sphere, as elsewhere – even when, finally, formal apartheid disappears. This will be less immediately dramatic work than the fight for sanctions or to free Nelson Mandela. But helping South Africans to advance their “democratic practice” in the spheres of their daily life, and helping them, as well, to ensure the socio-economic bases of genuine freedom, will be work of no less importance.

Negotiations in a Johannesburg Township

TCLSAC coordinator Chris Cavanagh recently visited South Africa and found, amidst the turbulence and violence of the current moment, what he describes as “a breathtaking amount of creative activity.” He witnessed, at first hand, one graphic example of such creativity when he sat in on one set of negotiations in a Johannesburg township

“Lights for Christmas” was the slogan of the civic leaders for this second meeting with the local authorities, a negotiation whose goal was the ending of the electricity fees boycott. I was told that the Transvaal Provincial Authority (TPA) had been pressuring Eskom (the electricity utility) to cut off the electricity. This would plunge the township into darkness and ex-

acerbate the violence between the Inkatha-supporting hostel dwellers and the township residents. The calm demeanour of the representatives of the local “civic” as they awaited the start of the meeting belied the urgent necessity of winning an agreement in order to prevent the township from exploding into violence.

In attendance this evening were the ten representatives of the civic, the TPA, Eskom and the chief clerk of the “official” (and largely discredited) Black local council. The meeting, by agreement, was chaired by the TPA, this being a precedent accepted in other negotiations. The goal of the civic? To win an agreement from Eskom to accept an interim payment of a monthly flat-rate to serve until a final agreement could be worked out.

Despite the apparent calm of all present in the comfortable township council chambers a battle was being engaged in. A very different terrain of struggle from the streets, though intimately connected to it. Behind this evening's meeting were the boycotts and the demonstrations which had made this township, like so many others, ungovernable by the white authorities. This negotiation was a logical outcome of the mass action that was ready to be taken up at any time. The task before the civic was to meet the challenges of this new form of struggle, away from the blunt and violent terrain of the streets. For the forces at work around a negotiating table are more subtle and, given the lack of popular experience with this form of struggle, perhaps more treacherous.

I was told that, going into the meeting, it was unknown how the local authorities would act. It was entirely likely that despite the agreement to enter negotiations with the civic such local authorities could obstruct the proceedings in any number of ways. Forewarned, I was also the more eager to see the civic in action. And what I saw was deeply impressive. I was amazed and inspired by the discipline and skill with which the civic kept control of the proceedings. A week earlier they had held a workshop to strategize for this meeting and their preparation was evident in their confident handling of the meeting, their acting as a well-practised team. Each of the ten delegates participated in the discussions, a different person taking the lead on different issues, making it difficult for the local authorities to zero in on any one leader. This clearly kept the local authorities, especially the TPA-chair, off balance. The chair repeatedly tried to sabotage the process and thrice attempted to walk out. Each time the civic leaders reacted with calm in the face of the chairman's arrogant statements that 'if that's the way it's going to be we can stop this all right here.' The chairperson actually gathered his papers and stood to leave. The civic, unfazed by this behaviour, persuaded him to return to his seat after each outburst. Both the Eskom representative and the council clerk seemed bewildered by the chair's behaviour and, seeing the lack of support for his tactics, he gave in each time.

The TPA's behaviour in this instance contradicted their participation and support of the negotiations that concluded in August 1990 in the Greater Soweto Accord, an agreement between the apartheid state and the Soweto Peoples' Delegation ending the rent boycotts and establishing a process to create a non-racial, democratic, metropolitan Johannesburg. It is difficult to interpret the chair's behaviour as being anything other than that of an uninformed and, perhaps, aberrant official in disagreement with his organization's approach. He received no support this evening and his behaviour presented the civic with a challenge to their control of democratic and diplomatic practice which it met well.

If it was true that the TPA was pressuring Eskom to cut

off the electricity then it seemed in this instance that Eskom was doing its best to avoid this option. The Eskom representative was cooperative and seemed at times almost desperate to reach an agreement. Indeed, the Eskom representative reported that Eskom was suing the Black local authority for non-payment of fees and this, coupled with Eskom's willingness to negotiate directly with civic, would almost certainly cause the destruction of the Black local council. Indeed, as I was told after the meeting, this was Eskom's intention. (For his part, the council clerk didn't act perturbed about this; rather he seemed resigned.) Not that one could gauge readily, from this one example, the intentions of Eskom in the complex and multi-layered negotiations taking place right across South Africa. This time the civic snatched an agreement from Eskom and there were "lights for Christmas." That same week, however, negotiations in Thokoza failed, the electricity was cut off and the predictable violence ensued.

Looking back on that evening's negotiations, therefore, it seemed to me best to understand it as a skirmish in a battle, in a battle for the "post-apartheid city," in a battle for a post-apartheid South Africa. To the terrain of the streets has been added that of meeting rooms where opposing forces come together, each to win an agreement that will advance its position. Strategic (and sometimes quite strange and unpredictable) alliances are made and abandoned as each side manoeuvres for advantage. On the one side you have an array of forces who wish to preserve as much of the status quo as they can; on the other you have forces working for the creation of a non-racial, democratic South Africa. Each side is trying to divide the other against itself and to carry the day. On this particular evening, in Johannesburg, I had seen the civic win.

A victory, but perhaps some of the dangers that spring from the very rapidity with which change is taking place in South Africa could also be seen here. Thus, as the Black local councils crumble under multiple onslaughts, a vacuum is created, one which threatens to suck the civic leadership into the role of local government. Most civics are committed to not assuming responsibility for local government but rather to remaining at the level of grassroots community representation - at least until the day much broader, more society-wide political and constitutional changes are firmly locked into place. However, the pull on civics is strong to succumb to the vacuum, to become, in effect, part of the existing structure before that structure has actually been sufficiently transformed, to become part of the structure when pressure upon it from without is still vitally necessary. I heard stories of some civic leaders who are to be seen driving around in the former local council's vehicles! This seemed to me to be one more small indication of the complexity of the present "dual moment," when the structures of apartheid are crumbling but a new South Africa has yet to be born.

have actually been able to provide for those in South Africa needing literacy training is of real concern. While the progressive organizations have made an impressive contribution in developing a teaching method, promoting a conception of the politics of literacy, publishing materials and setting up democratic learner structures, they are woefully understaffed, underfunded, and undertrained with precarious support and accountability structures and an over-dependence on foreign funding agencies. Indeed one of the longest established Johannesburg groups is in profound disarray just at the moment when its rich experience over the years is needed to shape a broader practice of literacy that begins to tackle the problem on a national scale.

Nine million adults in South Africa cannot read and write. Amongst the black adult population, it is estimated that only about 30% are literate, with another 25% semi-literate and fully 45% illiterate. The great majority of the illiterate adults live in the rural areas. Of the 45% of the black adult population that is illiterate, only one percent is actually in literacy classes. And 90% of the literacy programmes for the one percent of the illiterate population actually in classes are in lit-

eracy programmes run by the state or by industry. Initiatives through a variety of mission agencies make up another five percent. This leaves the NLC network providing literacy services to only five percent.

Mapping out the Field

Who are the groups in South Africa with an interest in promoting literacy? New stakeholders have emerged with the prospects of a post-apartheid government committed to basic education along with the heightened interest in literacy created by International Literacy Year. In addition to the community and work place-based groups and the Department of Education and Training (DET), there are many institutional actors in literacy emerging spontaneously or being cajoled to play a more active role. Within the state or quasi-state structures, DET is joined by the departments of health, prisons and "homeland" education plus the Human Science Research Council. At local government level, libraries are taking a new interest in literacy.

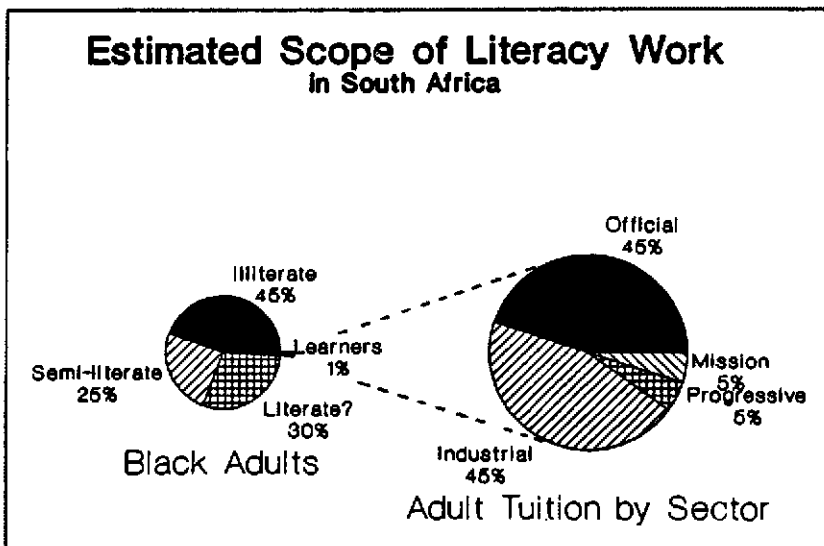
The corporate world is already playing an active role, providing almost half of the current literacy services. Lest old images of literacy among migrant workers in the mines come to mind, it is worth noting

the recent spate of articles in the South African press showing management aggressively pushing reorganization of the work process into Japanese management style. The same language prevalent in Canada is to be found, with "team concept" and "high commitment" offering a vision of workers with more participation and decision-making. Production in small teams necessitates new communication and problem-solving skills. All of this spells a new management interest in adult basic education.

Several universities have just opened up departments of adult basic education with more focus on literacy. One of their first concerns has been a mapping out operation, trying to grasp the dimensions of the problem and the institutional actors already at work, their strategies and their relative strength. The universities do not provide literacy programmes as such but do tend to engage actively with communities and work in practical areas of training and provision of teaching material.

It seems that the trade union movement is being cajoled into literacy. Regularly it is drawn into meetings to discuss literacy but has not yet come up with its own internal strategy, a not surprising set of circumstances given the pace of events and the heavy responsibilities the trade unions have taken on in other areas. COSATU's 1989 Education Conference passed a resolution to have a literacy campaign during 1990 but it would seem that other events took precedence. In October of this year, COSATU was invited to be a key participant in a WUS-sponsored literacy seminar in Namibia, focusing on the role of popular organizations in literacy.

Another body that looms large is the National Education Coordinating Committee. It met in December 1989 on the theme "Consolidate and Advance to People's Education" with "Literacy and Numeracy for All" as the sub-theme. The rationale for this was clear from



the "Secretariat Report and Evaluation" presented to delegates:

1990 is the International Year of Literacy. For us a literacy programme must accompany a human resources development programme and must be informed by the spirit of People's Education. A more realistic programme for us would seek to demarcate the 1990's in its entirety as a ten-year programme of Literacy, Numeracy and Human Resources Skill Development. Such a campaign will have to be imaginative, innovative and be able to capture the mood of the masses as the Defiance Campaign has ... The NECC/COSATU education department, in preparation for the International Literacy Year, staged a consultation with Literacy projects on 22 November, 1989. In fulfilling its role as the epicentre of the education struggle, the NECC realised the need to draw these structures into a national working team in order that they be informed of the understanding of literacy and People's Education ... There is a clear need for literacy and adult education programmes to be located within our developing understanding of People's Education for People's Power.

The reaction of some of the literacy activists present at the conference, however, was one of disappointment. Despite the promise of the theme, attention centred on formal education with literacy as just one of 12 commissions. The literacy commission recommended to the conference that NECC take up literacy seriously and work out a long term programme for dealing with it, that COSATU, NECC and progressive literacy organizations coordinate ILY activities, the NLC be strengthened and that a public consciousness-raising campaign around literacy be launched. The resolution adopted by the conference did urge the formation of regional and national coordinating bodies for the 1990 literacy awareness campaign made up of NECC in conjunc-

tion with COSATU and local literacy groups. It also urged that these three develop and implement a policy on literacy and numeracy as a matter of urgency. The capacity for leadership by these bodies, in the shifting political sands since February 2, have made this a difficult mandate to carry out. Certainly my impression during visits in August and November was of a very fluid situation, with multiple stakeholders in literacy and multiple definitions of what could and should come next.

Issues and Trends

Language policy was a topic of constant discussion. It would be hard to imagine a more linguistically complicated situation than South Africa. Here mother-tongue literacy has been foisted on the black population as part of apartheid's policy of separate development. For many illiterates, lack of access to the language of power and economic mobility, English, is an issue. Afrikaans until recently was associated only with the apartheid regime. More recently has come a recognition of the important voice of Afrikaans speakers, including not only progressive Afrikaners but the rural coloured population. Indeed for the rural population more generally, Afrikaans is a second language much more widely spoken than English. So suddenly a celebration of Afrikaans literature and a movement to legitimize and valorize it as part of the linguistic tradition of South Africa has emerged.

The language questions are key to questions of voice, and all of this is intimately linked to the apartheid state's mechanisms to regulate class, race and gender. One of the ironies of my stay in South Africa was the difficulty in finding a satisfactory way to talk with colleagues about language and literacy. To talk about illiteracy was to talk about the oppressed and how to redress their historic lack of voice and access. To talk about language was to explore how language and discursive practices held certain dis-

pensations of power and knowledge in place. My South African colleagues quite rightly rejected the labelling imposed by the apartheid regime into whites, coloured, blacks and Indians, so references even in informal settings were to the "so-called coloureds" and the "so-called Indians" and the "so-called whites." "Black" had a different connotation, a choice by the popular movement, but even so not without problems, according to UDF activists in Cape Town. They saw this as something ANC had to take into more active consideration. As far as they were concerned, when Mandela referred to "black South Africans" in his speeches, many South Africans of colour did not identify themselves within this category. Distinctions along the lines of gender and class were relatively straightforward. Race and ethnicity as social categories visibly caused unease, with the need to address equity issues on all sides but no comfortable way to give a name to difference.

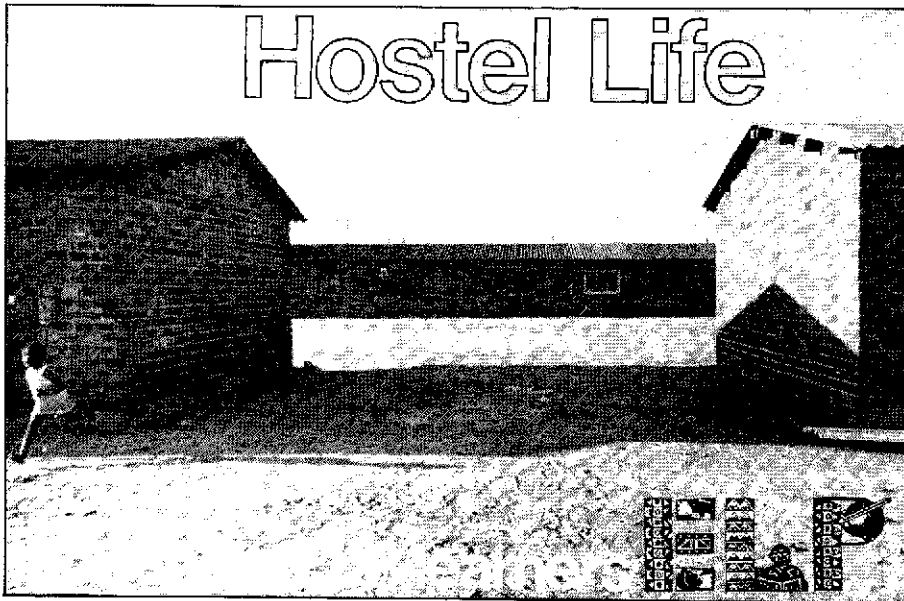
Another vexing question was that of political affiliation. The progressive literacy organizations joined together in 1989 to form the National Literacy Co-operation network. NLC began with 14 of the more long-established programmes. The NLC, like other organizations in civil society such as the civics, has been faced with whether or not it should be politically affiliated. These tensions around affiliation were a matter of frequent discussion during my two recent trips to South Africa, of concern to both members and non-members of NLC. They are also matters of public debate. The January 1990 issue of "Language Projects' Review," produced by one of the Cape Town group, NLP, included a statement by Brian Cooper, NLC national organizer, outlining NLC's plans and perspectives. The August 1990 issue included a sharply worded reply, taking strong exception to Cooper's suggestion that International Literacy Year rallies should be organized jointly with

COSATU and other MDM organizations. The writer, based in a community projects organization, suggests that the NLC should actively promote co-operation between Charterist and Black Consciousness organizations. He goes on to challenge the NLC to open up yet another area of co-operation, with none other than the literacy division of the Department of Education and Training!

the very limited coverage of current programmes. A committed literacy activist honestly commented during one conversation, "Why not put efforts into doing a better job through the DET night school programmes. Lots of people frequent them. We could have some real impact."

The question of the role of civil society in providing literacy came up in interesting ways, all of course, in

Another major issue was the question of whether some form of national literacy initiative should be contemplated. Many people were leery of any thoughts about a national literacy campaign. They recognized that South Africa does not have the size and homogeneity of a Nicaragua for a one-off campaign. Many talked of the very complex set of social forces at play with strong regional and rural/urban dif-



It is possible that affording the DET the chance to have a glimpse into our world might influence the whole outlook of the Department. This might lead to the changing of attitude on the part of the DET towards education and democracy ... If the African National Congress can talk to the Broederbonders in Lusaka, why can't literacy organisations make an attempt to involve and/or invite other organisations holding different positions to activities during ILY [International Literacy Year]. (Language Projects Review Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 6)

Indeed, within the shifting terrain created by the unbanning of the ANC and Mandela's release, the role of the state education services does become a question of urgency, especially taking into consideration

the larger context of unions, civic and women's organizations tortuously defining their terms of affiliation and autonomy in relation to party and (post-apartheid) state. One of the long-time ELP activists posed it as a doubt, wondering whether groups like ELP shouldn't continue on even after a post-apartheid regime with a strong commitment to literacy rendered their work unnecessary. The underlying assumption was that the state had primary responsibility for education, with an expectation of a strong state-sponsored schooling system in post-apartheid South Africa providing the educational services until now absent, including adult literacy. Others were strong in their convictions about a continued place for NGOs in literacy.

ferences along with an amazingly intricate web of diverse learner location *vis-à-vis* language/ethnic group/gender/race and class. There was also a clear recognition of the tradition of democratic practice in the popular movement and strong suspicion of the kinds of top-down command structures that national campaigns tend to adopt. There was much more interest in thinking about regional or sectoral campaigns that can respond to the specificity of both language and voice in particular sectors, *e.g.* a geographic region, a union or co-op campaign designed to do member education and strengthen the base as it did literacy, programmes designed specifically around issues related to women or around the community issues of the civics. In each case the liter-

acy campaign would be integrally related to strengthening a component part of civil society. In our brainstorming at CACE, there was even a stab at a broad campaign theme, "Learning to Govern."

Funding for literacy was a theme of constant discussion. People expressed grave concern about the post-apartheid state's ability to meet the high expectations for jobs, health and education and housing for all. And this was without taking into account the likelihood of debt and structural adjustment trends with lending agencies placing severe constraints on expanding social sector spending.

At CACE, with its ongoing research project on community organizations, the discussion went beyond whether the state had the capacity to provide schooling. There people questioned whether it was desirable to reduce provision of basic education to state-sponsored schooling only. The negative side of public schooling was analyzed, with its role in social regulation and control, and the built-in tendency to homogenize a diversity of social locations and suppress local experience and voice. What emerged as an alternate was a vision of post-apartheid society in which community groups continued to play an active role in education, with both state and NGOs assuming active roles in literacy, in a diversity of programmes finely tuned to local needs and issues.

The progressive literacy organizations felt an impending funding crisis at another level as their "funding window," that of "support for victims of apartheid," suddenly threatened to disappear. Various western embassies had indicated that their grants could only be counted on for another year or so. Once South Africa no longer qualified under the category of victims of apartheid, the special funds that many embassies had dispensed to popular group would cease to exist. At the same time, Kagiso Trust,

one of the main NGO funders channelling European Community funds into South Africa, had sent out a circular indicating that new criteria were now in place, and only "development projects" would be considered. Groups in Cape Town were in a flap. "What is development?" "Are we already doing it?" "Does it mean only things like income generating projects?" "What is an NGO?"

Early September brought a funding crisis of a different order. The Independent Development Trust indicated that 50 million rand (about 25 million Canadian dollars) would be available for literacy over the next three years. The IDT is a trust fund which is directed by a board of trustees, most prominent of whom is Justice Jan Steyn. The mass democratic movement had already made a decision to work with funds from the IDT. Large amounts had already been channelled into housing and the broad area of human settlements. Now the area of education and training area was being addressed. In October, the IDT convened a meeting to explore

ways in which the IDT could make a meaningful intervention on a national scale in launching a literacy campaign or programme. Here then was one more challenge for progressive educators - discovering how to work with the IDT in a way that would not make the next phase of literacy "funder-driven," derailing a more organic process of strengthening and expanding existing literacy work.

Interesting struggles are going on, then, to build a strong literacy movement. As in any society, literacy is a contested space. In South Africa one sees tendencies wanting to dispense education from the top down, a moral project for citizenship sure of its capacity to define what the illiterate need to know. This stands in tension with a vision of literacy as an empowering force, a tool for building strong, local organizations and a vital civil society reflecting multiple voices. The next months should prove fascinating with substantial new funding sources available amidst a political terrain that continues to shift at a dizzying pace.

From home to hostel see page 14

Fill in the crossword.
All the words come from the story.

DOWN

1. a home for families
2. very bad
3. hard things to cope with
4. single sex quarters
5. enough money

ACROSS

6. no work
7. too many people in a small place
8. free from other people's stares
9. married to a husband
10. a home made from corrugated iron

Here's SAR's crossword page. This is one of the exercises in ELP's booklet, "Hostel Life, stories by ELP learners"

A Tale of Two Cities: Debating Solidarity in Europe

Recent developments in the Frontline states of southern Africa have posed a real challenge for the western solidarity movement, raising questions both about the adequacy to the new moment of our inherited premises about solidarity and about the most appropriate directions for our future work. Regular readers of SAR will know that we have tried to facilitate a debate around such issues, notably in our on-going series of articles, notes and letters regarding developments in Mozambique. Not surprisingly, it is not just in North America but also in Europe that knotty ques-

tions are beginning to be posed, as various members of our parent committee, TCLSAC, were to find when they participated recently in two workshops in Europe. The first of these – defined as “a seminar on solidarity with Mozambique” – was held in Paris from 23-25 November (1990) by the European Campaign on South African Aggression Against Mozambique and Angola (ECASAAMA), an umbrella organization of progressive development agencies and solidarity groups drawn from virtually every country in western Eu-

rope. This seminar is reported on below by the TCLSAC delegation. The second venue was London, where, on December 1, the annual “solidarity study conference” of the UK’s Mozambique-Angola Committee (MAC) took as its theme, “Mozambique and Angola in a Changing World.” Victoria Brittain, a foreign editor of London’s Guardian newspaper and regular contributor to both *Le Monde Diplomatique* and to *Southern Africa Report*, filed an account of the MAC conference which we publish here as the second part of this feature.

I. Paris

The ECASAAMA Conference, November 1990

The ECASAAMA solidarity seminar in Paris was designed to draw from the European network of Mozambique support groups a cross-section of people with a “high prior level of knowledge and longstanding support for Mozambique” to “study and discuss the developments that have taken place in Mozambique over recent years, and the implications for our solidarity work in Europe and development work on the ground in Mozambique.” Several North American solidarity activists were also invited as well as a number of Mozambicans, some studying in Europe and some directly from Mozambique itself – most notably the country’s Minister of Finance, Magid Osman.

On one point, a point that fitted well with ECASAAMA’s original thrust of challenging South Africa’s aggression in the region, there was unity amongst the delegates: the need for a continuing response to the horrors of the war that has been inflicted by Renamo and its back-

ers upon the country’s Frelimo government and upon the Mozambican people. The conference was forcefully reminded of the grim realities of contemporary Mozambique and the fragility of the peace process there in an opening evening address by Paul Fauvet, a British solidarity worker who has now worked in Mozambique for many years in the information sector. Fauvet also spoke of some of the political and constitutional changes that are taking place in Mozambique, stressing, in particular, the moves towards a multi-party system.

Fauvet showed some nostalgia for the old system, characterized (in his rather benign formulation) as a “party-directed participatory democracy,” and suspicion of the merely “representative democracy” he now saw to be replacing it; he also raised some intriguing practical questions about the implications of multi-partyism for the functioning of, among other institutions, Mozambique’s “political

army.” However, he had little difficulty in convincing everyone at the conference that, given the kinds of alternative political parties (racist, regionalist) that are beginning to emerge in a “more pluralist” Mozambique, Frelimo must remain the primary focus of support from all those who wish Mozambique well in any up-coming election.

Yet there remained a more controversial undercurrent to the conference that Fauvet’s relatively unproblematic presentation did not touch upon. In other discussions on that first evening, it was suggested that the most positive outcome of Mozambique’s “democratization” might be not so much electoral as the opening up of space for the activity of newly autonomous popular organizations (the trade unions and women’s organization) and other independent initiatives in the rural areas (co-operatives, for example). Does this promise expression of the kind of voice from below – from an active “civil society” – that could

help counterbalance all those other, more negative pressures that have been forcing the best of the Frelimo leadership (and seducing the worst) to conform to global capitalist dictate?

As became much more apparent the following day, this latter concern dovetailed with other related concerns. Clearly some delegates had begun to ask themselves just what kind of a Mozambique it was that they were now committed to supporting. What, in fact, was left of that high promise of progressive, even socialist, transformation that had spurred so many beyond the African continent to align themselves with Frelimo and with the Mozambican revolution in the first place? Were we now merely supporting Mozambique out of habit? Or because - whatever little might be left of its original promise - Mozambique has been cruelly victimized? Or because the country has become one of the world's most blighted economic basket-cases, and therefore a worthy target for assistance on those grounds alone?

True, not all delegates were equally concerned about these kinds of questions. ECASAAMA represents a mix of groups, some more overtly political in left terms than others. Thus, the most narrowly developmental/charitable organizations in the network seem to feel the facts of war and poverty to be sufficient argument for unproblematic links to Mozambique. At the other extreme, there are one or two groups who have dropped out of ECASAAMA because, apparently, they find the Mozambican government to have now become - for whatever combination of reasons - so "neo-colonial" in its subordination to the western capitalist system as to have lost any special claim to their support. Somewhere in between were groups and individuals in the conference who felt reluctant to abandon historical ties with Frelimo and/or the Mozambican people but were concerned both

about recent governmental policies and about the activities of certain Frelimo leaders. (The crass economic aggrandizement and strident cultural nationalism of prominent Frelimo leader Armando Guebuza was mentioned prominently in this regard, amidst much controversy.) As one German delegate put the point, just what is it that distinguishes the socio-economic policies of the new Structural Adjustment-era Mozambique from a Kenya or a Malawi?

Some of this kind of questioning was placed even more firmly on the table in the wake of Minister Osman's Saturday speech. His was a speech that could, indeed, have been made by any one of a number of African finance ministers. Osman tended to water down Frelimo's history of progressive commitment, but he did accurately emphasize both the kind of administrative weaknesses that have haunted Mozambique's development effort and the high costs of externally-inflicted destabilization. What is the key to an alternative future? He mentioned the need for more active programmes of community development at the grass-roots and the positive role that NGOs might play in helping mount them. But his chief emphasis was elsewhere: to realize any kind of dramatic structural transformation there must be willed into existence "a dynamic and enterprising entrepreneurial class," a class that, in subsequent discussion, Osman was to term a "national patriotic bourgeoisie"!

Pressed in discussion Osman was more open. He stuck forcefully to the wisdom of his broad approach, despite questions raised as to whether capitalism in Africa really did have the kind of transformative potential he ascribed to it. But he acknowledged that, under African/Mozambican conditions ("imperialism" had not disappeared, the newly rich strata of Mozambicans were not necessarily contributing to broader economic growth),

the capitalist route could turn much more rapacious and cruelly exploitative ("capitalismo selvagem" - savage capitalism - was the term he used) than developmental. Only popular action from below, he now suggested, could be expected to check such tendencies, tendencies that could come to stalk even the Frelimo leadership.[†]

Did this, in turn, suggest the wisdom of foreign development organizations of progressive political hue seeking to support grass-roots development initiatives (rural-based cooperatives, for example) that showed promise of empowering people to demand more progressive policies from their government? With characteristic vigour another featured speaker, noted author Joe Hanlon, sought to forestall that reading of the current moment. True, his target was much broader, his basic agenda apparently being to baldly inform the assembled gathering of development/support groups that all their efforts in Mozambique merely served the cause of imperial penetration of the country (Sweden's ARO group thus being lumped in, pretty unceremoniously, with World Vision and the World Bank!) But he saved his harshest words for those who might think, as hinted above, that their support for various organizations and initiatives within "civil society" could actually help ordinary Mozambicans to advance their class struggle along progressive lines. According to Hanlon, more help for "civil society" means less help for the Mozambican state. And with the World Bank and IMF

[†] Interestingly, the Minister reminded his audience that the trade unions did not exhaust the range of "societal forces" that would have to express themselves in this way. After all, the working class remains a very small percentage of the population in Mozambique. Much depends, he argued, on how the peasantry organizes to check the political power of the urban areas and to make its voice heard.

themselves seeking to weaken and downscale the Mozambican state, Hanlon took this as proof positive of the misguided role of the left NGOs!

Subsequent debate tended - as such debates have a way of doing - to slither around these and other points, rather than to lay them to rest. Can we any longer consider the Mozambican state (if ever we could) an undifferentiated "good thing"? Doesn't class struggle (not to mention the influence of the World Bank) cut unevenly across the state itself? Might not the strengthening of some of the forces within "civil society" and the promotion of bottom-up democra-

tization (from trade unions, rural cooperatives and women's organizations) actually strengthen the state - and progressive forces within Frelimo itself - in its most positive expressions? And weaken some of its most negative ones?

Of course, the fact that questions of this order of seriousness and complexity were not, finally, "answered" may be less important than that they were raised at all. It is late in the day in the southern Africa struggle to pretend that tough dilemmas and hard political choices can be watered down in a sea of mere boosterism. But it would be equally mistaken to pretend that we need

not relate to what is happening in a country like Mozambique just because it is a less straightforward, more "messy" situation than most of us might once have hoped. As stated, debate highlighted the Paris conference - and on many nitty-gritty issues linked to development, the war, the experience of support work, in addition to the high profile concerns we have emphasized here. But so too did the on-going commitment of a wide spectrum of European activists - commitment to the cause of the Mozambican people, to an eventual redeeming of the promise of that country's revolution, and to its emergence from the long night of war and underdevelopment.

II. London

The "A Luta Continua" Conference, December 1990

BY VICTORIA BRITAIN

Since the dramatic changes of the last year in Southern Africa - Namibian independence, Nelson Mandela freed from jail and the South African regime's isolation a thing of the past - the solidarity movement has been searching for a redefinition of its role, and many of the individuals involved with the movement in the West have become demobilized - a silent and in many cases solitary demobilization which has not found a place to express itself.

In the past it was, of course, the simplest issues which attracted the broad support of an international constituency not otherwise held together by any broadly shared political project. In Britain, for instance, "Free Nelson Mandela, support the ANC," and "Independence for Namibia, support Swapo" were the slogans which summed up the Anti-Apartheid Movement's most basic positions.

Inevitably, with the first half of each demand achieved with breathtaking suddenness in 1990, the second halves have come in for a re-

think, especially as the political evolution in both South Africa and Namibia brought new faces, new ideas and new organizations from the region into contact with the grassroots of Britain's Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). Overnight the atmosphere changed from the embattled days of the mid-1980s when the few South African activists from inside the country able to travel and the stalwarts of the exiled ANC made the Anti-Apartheid Movement a powerful and virtually monolithic exponent in the UK of their urgent common demands on the West to give up its support for the apartheid regime.

This change of atmosphere might have been expected to affect other solidarity circles as well. Thus, one natural venue for a discussion of the new complexities of solidarity became December's annual day-long study conference of the Mozambique Angola Committee (MAC) (a U.K.-wide network whose small core group is comprised mainly of ex-cooperantes from Mozambique). And, indeed, the conference succeeded beyond its organizers' wildest dreams, marking, for many partic-

ipants, a watershed in their ideas about solidarity with the region in general and with Mozambique and Angola in particular, and forcing a re-examination of past practice.

The catalyst was a presentation by John Saul of *Southern Africa Report (SAR)* to the first plenum on the changing internal textures of Angola and Mozambique. He quoted a Mozambican official as suggesting that, in light of recent policy changes in Mozambique, "we may no longer be ourselves" and continued his analysis in the SAR style of frankly critical solidarity that is familiar to those who read the magazine regularly. But it was like an electric shock to a London audience. While in private the best-informed people (some of them in the core group of MAC itself) have discussed political trends with frankness and, often in recent years, with foreboding, the tradition in the UK has been that the public line be very different.

At the "A Luta Continua" conference two years ago, for instance, a short presentation by Joe Hanlon on the likely prospect of more concessions to South Africa by Fre-

limo under the pressures of economic and political destabilization was lambasted by a leading AAM official, backed by other senior figures in the solidarity movement, as outrageous and defeatist. The attack was so stinging that few expected Hanlon to have the courage to put his head above the parapet again. Moreover, it was just such an atmosphere that could still allow, at this year's conference, the previous chairperson of MAC to ex-

The 1990 conference started on familiar ground with a blistering attack on outside forces. The American anti-apartheid activist Prexy Nesbitt outlined four strands of US continued support for Unita: anti-communism, the MPLA's economic policies not being sufficiently pro-Western, the success of "Low Intensity Conflict," and the racism in the US that permits defence spending in Angola which he suggested might be as high as \$35 million. It was a pre-

their programmes have failed. Why on earth does the West still back these institutions, he asked; no one would ever back a business that did so badly? Hanlon's answer is that the aid donors are the new missionaries and the World Bank is leading the recolonization of Mozambique. Real income has dropped under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), he said, leaving two-thirds of the population in absolute poverty. In an aside which he did not develop



Orde Eliason/Impact Visuals

Protest rally in Hyde Park, London, marking Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday, 1988

hort solidarity with Frelimo and the MPLA on behalf of socialism in Mozambique and Angola! What one long-time cooperator has called the "magical correctness" of the MPLA and Frelimo had the solidarity movement by the throat. Between the taboos of the anti-apartheid movement culture, and the failure of the mainstream press to provide any serious analysis of regional events, the grassroots have been sustained on a diet of myth and half-truth for years.

sentation which would have satisfied a MAC audience about three or four years ago, but failed to respond to the current questioning mood.

The tone changed, and the basic focus turned towards internal policy dynamics with the next speaker. Joe Hanlon produced a sober analysis of the effects of Structural Adjustment as embraced by Frelimo in Mozambique and some chilling detail regarding the see-saw changes in World Bank (and IMF) thinking as

but which hung over much of the later debate, he added that no government can be elected in Mozambique on a Structural Adjustment Programme.

The combination of Hanlon's economic analysis with Saul's much more political presentation of the capitalist road now taken by Mozambique's leadership gave most of the audience more new information in half an hour than any half year of solidarity conferences they

might have attended before. Saul quoted Mozambican leaders as now being almost exclusively preoccupied with defining the kind of capitalism they want to put in place, and with the best means of producing a new entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Saul made clear that we could scarcely turn our backs on Mozambicans nor forget the cruel forces that have brought their country to this pass. But we must also evaluate and deal with the balance of forces that right now confronts us, whatever may have produced the present situation. As he summarized the point, in a haunting phrase that people repeated to each other well after the day, "this is not the future we aligned ourselves to 10 or 20 years ago."

He went on, again carefully quoting Frelimo leaders, to say that "if there is to be a blunting of this hard edge [of current state policies] it can only come from inside Mozambique" and cited the democratization of the trade union movement and the women's movement as bearing some promise of facilitating the pressure from below that might counter the anti-people line of part of the leadership. Drawing a parallel with the evolution of politics in South Africa, he quoted well-known South African union and community activist, Moses Mayekiso (himself a member of the ANC), as saying that not only a strong South African Communist Party but also strong and autonomous unions and civic associations are what are needed to keep the ANC honest [see "Building Civil Society: Moses Mayekiso Interviewed," *SAR*, July, 1990: ed.]. In short, a vibrant and assertive "civil society" is a crucial requirement in all these countries, Saul argued, using the phrase - "civil society" - that was to be re-echoed in the conference throughout the day. "There is political tension, even class struggle, within these societies, and we in the solidarity movement have got to understand these dynamics and make tough choices," said Saul.

In immediate hostile response, Marga Holness of the Angolan Information Office said that the role of solidarity is not to be "paternalist" or judgemental, seeming to trivialize an eminently serious discussion by suggesting that some people might merely be feeling personally "let down" by policy changes in Mozambique and Angola. But it was the Mozambican ambassador to the UK, Armando Panguene, who

The ambassador's plea that the organizations in Mozambique recently granted new autonomous powers (the trade unions and the women's movement, for example) by Frelimo should not be a reference point for solidarity groups in the West struck an awkward note with a number of later speakers involved in concrete work in Namibia, Angola, and South Africa.[†] Several spoke of the difficulty of evaluating competing claims for aid and the inevitable need for making political choices in a volatile and fragmented political arena. In sharp contrast, however, one senior AAM official leaped in to stress that the nature of solidarity work had not changed, that it must be guided exclusively by the people who are struggling in the region and must not incorporate Westerners' own politics. Paralleling Ambassador Panguene's intervention, he said that "we must have faith in the people who are struggling, we must trust them." The difficult question of which segments of the society - which of "the people" - we will choose to "trust" and to support in the future was not even addressed. But the question once posed will not go away.

The habit of democratic discussion will not be born overnight in these circles, of course, and the habit of publicly accepting the "line" will die hard. But in the aftermath of the December conference many people said they had been galvanized from their demobilization by a debate that began to suggest new ways of looking at and relating to the internal changes in the region's politics. "A luta continua," indeed.

[†] The ambassador seemed to imply that a practice of simultaneous support for both Frelimo and such organizations of "civil society" would be contradictory; indeed, at one point he even came perilously close to defining support for these organizations as being tantamount to support for Renamo, leaving some to wonder just what was the nature and substance of the autonomy some Frelimo leaders might have in mind for them. [ed.]



Dave Hartman/Afrpix

stunned the meeting by getting up in the body of the hall to launch a response of great emotional force. "Advise us - is it to be socialism or capitalism? Which is the money we can find which will not kill us?" he asked. The role of the solidarity movement is to be modest, he said. "If you come to talk in this detail it is because we have brought you here. If you are working with Frelimo and the MPLA, help them, not civil society - I can assure you that you will not find more progressive people than in Frelimo and MPLA. You have to trust us, politically, intellectually."



Zimbabwe co-operative

Anna Zieminski/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

Were They Pushed or Did They Jump? Zimbabwe and the World Bank

BY LIONEL CLIFFE

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In his July 1990 budget speech, Senior Minister Bernard Chidzero announced a major shift in Zimbabwe's economic policy, a package that would include a Trade Liberalization Programme and other measures that had been urged on the government by the World Bank, among others. In the aftermath of this announcement there are promises of restoration of aid-flows from the World Bank, the US, and Britain that have been curtailed ever since

Zimbabwe's rejection of IMF policy conditionality in 1984. Thus the strongest economy in the SADCC region, the only one with some prospect of economic independence, has been thrown open to external competition/penetration.

Not that the pre-existing pattern, with its protection for a significant home-based industrial sector and its tight control of foreign exchange, was a mark of socialist commitment. In fact, this system of control owed a great deal to the economic nationalism that dates back to the settler regime of Ian

Smith, and the international sanctions that were imposed against his unilateral declaration of "independence" in 1964. Still the independence government had itself turned its back on the IMF-imposed policies it had first followed in the wake of the debt crisis of 1982, and instead had begun to use the inherited controls to good effect to mount its own version of an "adjustment" programme, one that reduced the country's debt ratio, and promoted significant growth in the late 1980s. Thus the most recent changes in Zimbabwe policy have broader relevance for the region and Africa, for

they mark a u-turn on the part of one government that had met with relative economic success precisely by *not* following IMF-WB diktats.

Indeed, Zimbabwe's change of heart is all the more difficult to explain precisely because of its comparative economic health. This is not a situation where a country, faced with massive and growing debt that was impossible to service, with acute balance of payments deficits and with economic decline, has had no choice but to accept a bailing out by the IMF and an uncritical adoption of its structural adjustment policy prescriptions. Why the shift, then? What is its nature – and its implications?

For some the mystery seems to deepen further in light of the fact that, in the last few months, the Zimbabwe government has come out with a policy for land reform which in some respects could be considered radical. Thus, 1990 was the year when the entrenched, inhibiting clauses in the 1980 Lancaster House constitution protecting property rights of white farm owners could be repealed. Right on cue, a constitutional amendment has been put before Parliament to give the government power to acquire land, on relatively favourable terms, for resettling African farmers on the white-owned farms. Moreover, a new policy for acquiring half the remaining farms for such purposes has been approved by Cabinet. We shall see that there is, perhaps, less of a contradiction between the two sets of policies than meets the eye – the land initiative already beginning, in practice, to fall into grooves that may prove quite compatible with World Bank thinking. Nonetheless, the initial question remains. How, in the first instance, are we to interpret Zimbabwe's capitulation to the World Bank?

The old system

Since 1965, the country has had strict controls on imports. Virtually nothing produced in Zimbabwe

could be imported, and, because of acute shortages of foreign exchange since Independence, strict rationing of most other imports was also gradually introduced. Through a complicated system companies were stringently allocated imports of raw materials and equipment to carry on production, with distribution firms given even smaller allocations for consumer goods.

In its early years, this structure boosted import-substitution industries to a massive extent – from producing 600 separate items in 1965 to 8,000 at present. Where it was far less successful was in promoting exports – a growing concern for the government. Indeed, the explicit rationale for the recent change is to prioritize exports, especially of manufactured products: the freeing of imports from the previous quota system is to be coupled to an export incentive mechanism as well as measures to boost investment. Thus, the first goods whose import is to be immediately deregulated are certain industrial inputs: tin plate, plastic granules, chemical dyes, etc. The government plans a scheme for retention of export earnings by companies, and intends to set up free trade zones, export processing zones and bonded facilities for importing stocks of equipment which companies can have on hand to avoid production cut-backs due to shortage of spares. More generally there is to be a national Investment Centre to streamline approval of joint ventures and other projects.

Clearly, such proposals suggest that behind the new economic policy departures lies the intention that Zimbabwe cash in by becoming a “newly industrializing country.” Yet ironically, in its proposals, Zimbabwe seems to be ignoring the actual experience of existing NICs; these latter actually exercised tight control over imports and the overall payments situation while, indeed, certainly promoting exports. There is a further irony: as we shall see below, some of the measures proposed

for promoting exports actually could have been incorporated into existing strategy!

Needless to say, other economic changes intimated by Chidzero include such predictable aspects of conventional WB/IMF structural adjustment packages as removal of price controls and elimination of food and other subsidies, both of which are administered through the extensive network of parastatals inherited from settler colonial times. There is also to be a rationalization and even selling off of such parastatals. Of course, it is true that subsidies to parastatals have been responsible for as much as a third of the considerable budget deficit of recent years. However, these subsidies include the generous (and in advance) price setting for crops – one measure responsible for Zimbabwe's food self-sufficiency.

There is also a proposal to cut other government expenditures significantly by reducing the civil service by one-third, for example – a move that is not likely to contribute much towards alleviating the all-absorbing problem of unemployment. More importantly, it is well to remember that the principal reason for Zimbabwe's previous 1984 rejection of IMF policy conditions (conditions that had been adhered to in the previous two years) was to safeguard social expenditure – in health (where the country has one of the best free services in Africa) and in education (where expansion of access has been one of the unqualified successes of the first ten years of Independence). Now these services will be required to be partly self-financing.

True, a successful rearguard action in education seems to have limited fee-paying in primary schools to boarding costs only, rather than tuition, a qualification that will prevent the rural and urban poor from shouldering too much of an extra burden. But what is particularly interesting is that the World Bank's own reformed line on structural adjustment (now with a “human face”)



Paul Weinberg/Afrapix/Impact Visuals

Maize farm south of Harare

is to avoid school and health fees for the poor and World Bank officials have been urging this line on Zimbabwe since the government's initial announcement that it planned to charge them. This is one more of the anomalies that seems to indicate just how much the new policy changes have a distinctively home-grown element.

In fairness, it should be said that the new proposals have other features that will limit their draconian effect on worker and peasant households and on the current functioning of the economy. The cuts in subsidies are to be phased in and their eventual elimination will be accompanied by some measures to compensate vulnerable groups. The large, state-owned and heavily-subsidized iron and steel industry will continue to receive protection because of its "regional and national strategic significance." The trade liberalization will also be introduced over a five year period, supposedly giving more time for less competitive industries to become more efficient.

Harmful effects

However, these safeguards will only slow down some of the harmful social and economic effects. There will be price increases, and inflation is predicted to double in the next year – this in a context where, in the name of freeing markets, the minimum wage legislation is reportedly to be removed. Economically, the opening of the country to imports – especially when the measures are fully adopted in 5 years time – may well permit a flood of non-essential consumer goods in addition to the intended inputs for industry. The possible result: a worsening of the balance of payments position that could far outweigh any benefits to be derived from increased exports.

Moreover, even the latter hope – that of increased exports – may prove to be a pipe-dream, floated as it is at the very moment when there is some prospect that South Africa itself may become sufficiently respectable to be able to look within the region for the export markets

that it needs so badly. In this regard, the opening up of the Zimbabwe economy before the terms of South Africa's future relations with SADCC have been negotiated seems particularly short-sighted. The plan to ease the balance of payments situation and to cut the debt service ratio (the proportion of export earnings devoted to interest and repayment) from 30% to 25% through increased exports and through the cheaper finance expected from the WB, may likewise prove to be unrealistic; the constraints on exports just mentioned, as well as expected oil price increases, could well mean that any goodies to be gleaned from the World Bank will not be enough to realize such intentions.

Further doubts about the wisdom of a complete open door policy are raised when one compares such prospects with Zimbabwe's experience in the years since the country's rejection of IMF/World Bank prescriptions when it followed its own version of "adjustment." This involved using the mechanisms of for-

exchange, import and price control that the state had to hand and it did lead to a fair amount of austerity – a decline in real terms in the minimum wage, etc. But, in many respects, the programme has been markedly successful: it restored the balance of payments to surplus and allowed repayments to reduce the debt servicing burden from 40% to 25% of exports without restructuring. And it managed to regenerate growth, after a mid-1980s stagnation, to an average of 4.2% a year from 1985 to 1990. All this in a context where donor flow of funds was stopped, where a severe drought was experienced in 1987 and where continued destabilization by South Africa in Zimbabwe and in Mozambique (whose corridor to the port of Beira is defended by Zimbabwean forces) required mounting defence expenditure.

Manufacturing in particular has been growing apace; largely financed locally it is now responsible for 30% of GDP. Yet there is a darker side: this achievement has contributed to a great shortage of foreign exchange for capital goods, and this, together with limits on the repatriation of profits, has no doubt helped curtail investment. There has been almost no major new private foreign investment and the overall investment level is now down to 15% of GDP. And export earnings have stagnated, owing to the mainly falling prices of the agricultural and mineral exports on which the country is still dependent. Employment, too, has become a major problem for the government; it has only grown by 15% between 1984 and 1990 and while this is still quite high in African terms it does mean that there are only about 30,000 new jobs per year, for 200,000 school leavers.

The Policy Change

It is, of course, concern about investment levels, plus increasing fears about the effects of unemployment, that are among the explicit reasons given to justify the policy switch we have been examining. Nonethe-

less, what needs further explanation is how and why the open economy package, rather than modifications to the old adjustment measures to include investment and export generation, was chosen as the strategy to achieve the government's investment and employment goals. In fact, some employment and livelihood creating measures had already been announced by the Minister for Labour before Chidzero's speech: a national youth service, more vocational training and employment creation for ex-combatants and others. And the renewed emphasis on land acquisition from white farms for resettlement has also been seen as being, in part, a means to provide livelihoods.

Why, then? There is no doubt that the World Bank's increasing influence in Zimbabwe has been important in this respect. Bank officials, who have been urging liberalization policies – "Zimbabwe must bite the bullet" – for some years, now claim to be "much more on the inside" than in earlier years. In late 1990, for example, there were, in the course of one month, 30 World Bank missions looking at some aspect or another of the economy. Perhaps the extent of Western donors' say was most graphically exemplified when, recently, they were largely instrumental in having an experienced (but eminently progressive) Permanent Secretary in the ministry responsible for industrial policy replaced by one Dr. Nziramasanga (a Zimbabwean who up to that precise point had been teaching economics at a US college) at a salary more than four times that of other Permanent Secretaries – payable, in US dollars, in an overseas account, by US AID!

Yet the very extent of this influence must itself be explained. And it must be done more in terms of internal political shifts than objective economic circumstances (e.g. acute crisis forcing the decision as has been the case so often elsewhere, in the region and beyond). For, as noted,

Zimbabwe itself seems to have made much of the running, even going further (e.g. on school fees) than the IMF/World Bank would urge. It seems obvious that what was at work here was partly a failure of nerve regarding the viability of any and all forms of radical economic nationalism – this in the wake of events in USSR and eastern Europe and of the failure of African "socialisms." But the measures also mark both the accelerating rightward drift of Zimbabwean politics and, more specifically, President Mugabe's increasing ideological isolation within his own Cabinet (see Lee Cokorinos, "Zimbabwe Ten Years After: Prospects for a Popular Politics," *SAR*, July, 1990).

As noted earlier, the adoption of the National Land Policy, at about the same time as the new deal with the World Bank was being worked out, might seem to indicate that some radical, even if primarily radical nationalist, currents remain within the Zimbabwean polity. This policy did call for a renewed commitment to the 1983 target of resettling 162,000 households (three times the present number) on white farm land; it is estimated that this would mean acquiring half of the 12 million hectares still left in white hands – at relatively low prices, paid in local currency, and even making use of deferred payments. Such a step is compatible with the employment/livelihood creation imperatives, of course. At the same time, the lack of any real socialist logic is reflected in a proposal that (as in the second phase of land redistribution in Kenya) resettled families should no longer be selected mainly on the basis of need but rather on that of "proven farming ability" – and in the fact that there is to be a crucial sub-sector in which black capitalist farmers will be trained and financed. In short, there seems little prospect of any very progressive counterweight to the current direction of development in Zimbabwe arising from this sphere.

Framing Cuba, Rewriting Angola The CBC Documentary

BY EDGAR J. DOSMAN

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"Angola," a documentary on the CBC television programme, *Witness* (September 4, 1990) and repeated on *Newsworld*: from Stornoway Productions (producers: Kitson Vincent, David Ostriker and Martha Fusca)

The CBC's television broadcast last September 4, 1990, of "Angola" surprised Africa-watchers in Canada. Although the Angolan war, under way since its formal independence from Portugal in 1975, has been one of the most costly Third World conflicts, its importance extends well beyond that large, impoverished African country itself. Indeed, Angola has become a codeword for an assortment of inter-locking extreme-right global causes: the Reagan Doctrine; the anti-Cuban crusade; and South Africa as bulwark against communism. Given this potent brew, and the scarce media attention devoted to Angola, it was assumed that the CBC would show responsibility, if not leadership, in its programming on this subject.

Instead, the "Angola" served up to Canadian viewers as an hour-long, prime-time assessment of this war produced by Stornoway Productions of Toronto, was hauntingly similar stylistically to East German propaganda films of the Ulbricht era. Here was a world of simplistic stereotypes, of blood and gore, of testimony from Cuban deserters, US officials and, of course, Jonas Savimbi. Skilfully packaged as a "documentary," the Ulbricht style was evident throughout in the absence of testimony from internationally recog-

nized experts. The story line was overtly one-sided; "Angola" had a clear message. It was, in terms of genre, propaganda journalism.

The argument went as follows: horribly cruel Cuban mercenaries, stooges of the Soviets, torturing Angolans and brain-washing their children, occupied the country in 1975 to prevent the victory of Western democratic forces led by UNITA's Savimbi. South Africa responded: it would not tolerate the defeat of Savimbi, and, with UNITA, it now shared on its own door-step the global Marxist-Leninist threat, determined to establish a "strategic foothold" in Africa. Heroic Savimbi, nearly crushed but representing the true will of the Angolan people, fights on in the cause of liberty and of Western values such as representative democracy and the "free play" of market forces. Finally the Soviets tire in 1988, and tell their Cuban stooges to get out - but Savimbi has other enemies which prop up the Marxist Government, particularly the US oil companies which, like the Cubans, profit hugely from the Angolan civil war. Of course, under Reagan, the US has wisely wakened up, rejecting the Clark amendment that limited its intervention in Angola, and had begun large-scale arms shipments to Savimbi - the right side. Western values will prevail - though at huge cost to the Third World.

Why would the CBC choose such obviously biased material to orient the public towards one of the most savage wars since 1945? Why would the CBC give such material an apparently official sanction with an introduction by Alan Gottlieb? If it wanted to stimulate debate with

this vicious attack on Cuba, why was a Cuban perspective excluded, even from the round-table discussion that concluded the four-part series entitled "Witness"? Even worse, and it is this which prompts my response, the *Globe and Mail* television reviewer covering the broadcast, John Haslett Cuff, accepted the Stornoway documentary as a "brilliant portrait," as "responsible" and as helping to counter "the often uninformative, simplistic and politically biased accounts of world events that make up the bulk of mainstream media reporting." Indeed he rated it at year's end as one of 1990's ten best documentaries!

Unfortunately, it was John Haslett Cuff and the CBC who had, apparently, swallowed an almost absurdly "uninformative, often simplistic and politically biased" storyline. By reproducing this material - Stornoway is entitled to produce what it wants, after all - the core media of Canada are making news and shaping public opinion. Mr. Haslett Cuff might argue that he was reviewing form rather than substance, that he found the production gutsy, not bland, and therefore debate-provoking. But that is not at all what his review said. Can it be that North American journalists are now so conditioned to anti-Cuban thinking that Cuff repeated it in his review merely as an ideological reflex, precluding rational argument?

The facts

The lack of any attempt on the part of the CBC (or of Mr. Cuff, for that matter) to meet even the most minimal standards of journalistic objec-

tivity is particularly troubling for another reason: Angola has been well-researched, the main points in its tragic war not being in real doubt for anyone who takes the trouble to read. Yet the fact that a travesty like the "Angola" documentary can nonetheless be perpetrated suggests that it may be worth reminding ourselves of those facts one more time — the better to arm ourselves against any further assaults, by Stornoway or others, on the truth of the matter.

While every war fought within a framework of external intervention is complex in its dynamic and cast of characters, two central themes, one external and one internal, structured the Angolan conflict after 1975. On the external side, South Africa was determined to destroy Angola. Up until 1988 the SADF ravaged a seemingly helpless Angola by air and by land, not least by means of the direct invasions in 1975, 1980 and 1987 that turned the southern provinces into a no-man's-land and inflicted irrevocable environmental (not to mention human and property) damage. Indeed, the worst enormities only ceased in 1988/89. That was when South African military chief Magnus Malan and his South African Defence Force were finally driven out of Angola after he unwisely overcommitted his forces inside Angola so as to further consolidate apartheid by completing his so-called "ring of steel." The defeat produced the very opposite of his intention: it tipped the political balance in Pretoria, and confronted South Africa with the unfamiliar choice of either fighting from a position of weakness, or terminating its illegal occupation of Namibia in compliance with UN Resolution 435. When South Africa, prodded by the US, chose to negotiate and set in motion the independence of Namibia, it changed the entire southern Africa scene — a truly historic development which could not have been anticipated a year earlier.

Yet South Africa only negotiated because it was defeated.

Defeated? No serious observer can deny the obvious: the Cuban military mission stabilized Angolan defences in the teeth of South African invasion after 1975, and, once again, served to counter-balance the renewed and near fatal invasion by South Africa in 1987 with a further military build-up, at Angola's request. As Gillian Gunn, formerly of Georgetown University's Center of Strategic Studies and now with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Security, has concluded, the changed military balance was decisive in the Angolan-Namibian drama. Cuba's role, therefore, was critically important for Africa's struggle against apartheid in the near hopeless years after 1975. All Western countries, including Canada, merely talked, complaining about apartheid but allowing South Africa to destabilize its neighbours (Angola and Mozambique in particular); only Cuba, the destination of fully one-half of all African slaves shipped to the Americas during the nineteenth century, stood by Black Africa when it came under siege from apartheid.

Kissinger calculates

The principal internal dynamic in newly-independent Angola was the political chaos left by the sudden collapse of a very primitive form of Portuguese colonial rule and by the competing aspirations of very separate peoples: the Kimbundu, Kikongo, Ovimbundu, and others. Perhaps a Namibian-style UN-supervised election would have forced compromise and prevented internal war, but no UN action was possible without great-power agreement. The Vietnam fiasco had made Kissinger bitter, sensitive to the need for a victory in the Third World in order to balance accounts. Cuba in particular, but also, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union, had close relations with the MPLA. In attempting to spike the MPLA, Kissinger

thought he had a regional advantage. Zaire, though led by General Mobutu, one of Africa's most notorious tyrants, was a reliable US client controlling Angola's northern and eastern borders. Moreover, Kissinger calculated, since Mobutu coveted the Cabinda enclave, Angola's petroleum reserve, he would have other reasons for agreeing with US policy.

Internal war and foreign intervention now merged: the January, 1975 Alvaro Agreement for the transition to independence was immediately violated by Kissinger: his own cherished Angolan faction, Holden Roberto's FNLA, used renewed covert US aid in January to launch a February attack from Zaire; in mid-summer the US also provided arms to UNITA (the third major claimant to nationalist laurels). The Soviet Union responded with more aid to the MPLA. Yet as late as August, 1975, there was still hope for a coalition government as envisioned in the Alvaro Agreement. A cease-fire was announced between MPLA and UNITA, and an official alliance between the two rivals was very nearly achieved. However, according to Gerald Bender, the leading US authority on this period, any electoral option became impossible under the weight of US pressure for a military solution rather than negotiations: Kissinger still thought he could win on the battleground. Against the advice of his senior advisors, he rejected any idea of UN or OAU involvement in a mediation effort; instead, the US provided another \$30 million in covert military assistance to the FNLA and UNITA, this in spite of their links, that were also now beginning to firm up, with South Africa. Thus the foreign lineup was complete as independence day on November 11 approached. The prize was Luanda and international recognition.

The count-down now accelerated. South Africa set up bases for

the FNLA and UNITA at Calombo and Mapupa, and was already preparing its strike force (Operation Foxbat) for its subsequent Angolan invasion (October 14), to be carried out under the cover of a Namibian military sweep that it had begun in mid-September. When South Africa's first troops entered Angola at Cunene, Zairian forces (with Holden Roberto in their baggage train) were already deep inside Angola, threatening Luanda itself. Moreover, Zaire's gunboats were standing offshore from Cabinda, controlling the country's main trading artery. The South African invasion seemed likely to provide the knockout punch; by late October the MPLA appeared doomed, facing a two-pronged aggression converging on the capital. Kissinger on October 29 contacted the Soviet Union from what he assumed was a position of military superiority.

Havana was more worried, and under heavy pressure to respond. Its relationship with the MPLA went back to 1961, almost to the birth of the Cuban revolution itself - a relationship much longer and deeper than that between Angola and the Soviet Union. Yet if the MPLA was in a desperate situation militarily, Cuba also stood to lose enormously from any large-scale involvement in Angola. It would almost certainly destroy the first positive steps in improved US-Cuban relations, for example. Indeed much of Kissinger's optimism sprang from his confidence in Cuban willingness to adopt this logic and accept defeat.

The Cuban decision

There were two steps in the eventual Cuban decision to stake its future in Angola. Already, before the overt South African invasion, Castro had agreed to reinforce Cuba's military advisory mission in Angola. But after October 14 it became apparent that an advisory force could not prevent the defeat of the MPLA by the technologically far superior

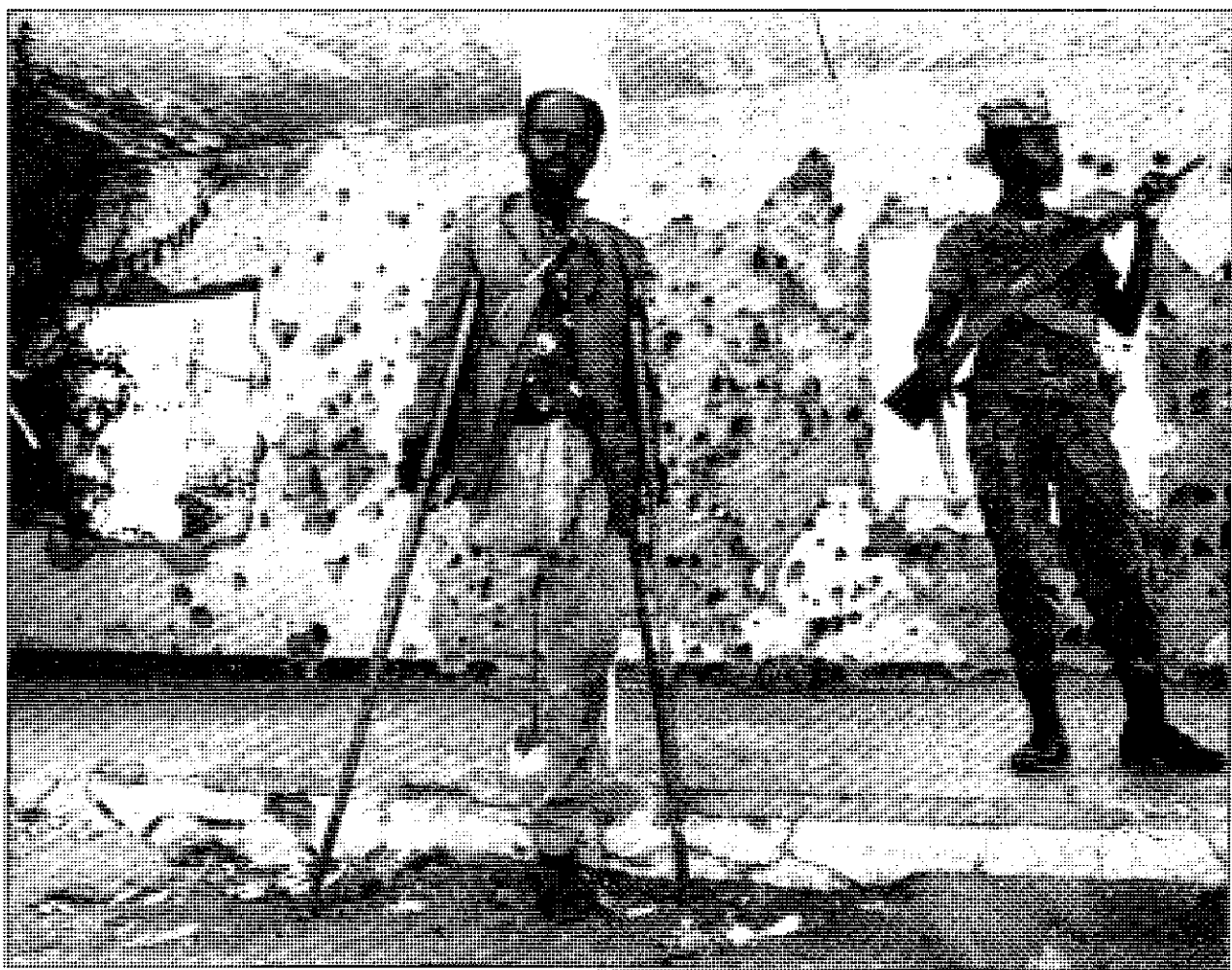


Angolan girl, shot in back during war and with her family killed, now lives in Lubango state orphanage

South African-led forces. Only a massive Soviet air-lift of equipment, combined with the despatching of Cuban combat forces, could stem the tide. To Kissinger's astonishment, Castro responded with a daring counter-offensive against the invading South African forces.

By mid-November Operation Carlota was stunningly effective and the battlefield situation reversed; by spring, the South African Defence Force, with Zairian and mercenary forces, had been defeated, along with UNITA and the FNLA (these two forces then promptly turning

John Liebenberg/Impact Visuals



John Liebenberg/Impact Visuals

Manuel Angula with FAPLA soldier at destroyed Santa Clara border post between Angola and Namibia

their guns on each other, even before the war had ended!). Diplomatically, South African and US intervention alongside UNITA and the FNLA had doomed any claim to credibility the latter might have, with 41 of 46 African states recognizing the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola.

The South Africans were defeated then, but, ironically, Operation Carlota also gave them a powerful diplomatic weapon. Now they could seek to claim for themselves – at least *vis-à-vis* the United States, where such things play particularly well – the status of vital bulwark against an increasingly menacing

global “Soviet-Cuban threat” – the central guardian of western values and freedom in Africa. In consequence, South Africa proceeded to set up UNITA in Jamba, within the SADF’s own sphere of operations, and made Savimbi, now utterly dependent on the South Africans, into the democratic beacon of “occupied” Angola. Meanwhile, with increasing savagery, South Africa continued to destabilize Angola, in order prevent the emergence of a strong front-line state – and one with the additional strength of an East-West railway system that, left to function effectively, might have helped the southern African region as a whole further to reduce its de-

pendence on South African infrastructure!

As for Cuba, it was now trapped. South Africa’s occupation of Namibia, and its hold over UNITA, meant that it could control the level of Cuban involvement. As the extreme right in the US moved into the political mainstream with the electoral victory of Ronald Reagan in 1980, Pretoria’s propaganda line, noted above, became increasingly effective. The Miami Cubans saw it as another in their anti-Castro campaign. And Jonas Savimbi became the darling of the well-heeled Reagan Doctrine cocktail circuit. Meanwhile, South Africa stepped up its

destruction of Angola and Mozambique. Conservative myth-makers to the contrary, the very last thing it wanted was the removal of the Cuban military mission, since this gave Magnus Malan the kind of ideological leverage needed in his pursuit of international support. For this reason South Africa rejected every UN or OAU initiative on Angola and Namibia, while Cuba for its part supported every such initiative – in order to escape its unenviable role as security back-up in a guerilla war that Luanda could not fully win.

By 1987 Malan appeared to have triumphed. The front-line states were cowed and Mozambique lay in ruins; the opposition within South Africa had been checked. Moreover, the cult of Savimbi was at its peak, with regular visits by gullible or like-minded journalists to the “alternate capital” of Jamba. The US was once again supplying UNITA with covert aid. And Angola was in tatters, choked with mutilated war victims and mired in destruction.

But then Malan overplayed his hand: in September, 1987, he decided to try for a knock-out blow – to go beyond stalemate and take out the MPLA and the Cubans once and for all. Although nearly successful by January, 1988, he grew overconfident with his new military technology. Following easy slaughters of Angolan forces, poorly advised by Soviet military experts, the SADF-UNITA forces were checked at Cuito Cuanavale, and then driven out of southwestern Angola by a fresh and powerful Cuban strike force, requested by Angola after this latest South African escalation of the conflict.

This time, however, the Cubans managed not only to defend Angola but also to force a settlement of the Namibian situation. The Angola sink-hole had been enormously costly to Cuba, and Castro knew that this was his opportunity to leave with honour. Indeed the subsequent negotiations, brokered by the United States, changed the in-

ternational diplomatic perception of Cuba in the eyes of many. Cuba was clearly an independent player; in contrast, the Soviet role had been a minor one, and remained so during the four-power (Angola, Cuba, South Africa, US) meetings. Andrew Young had been criticized for asserting, some years ago, that Cuba played a stabilizing role in Angola: now his conclusion, so much closer to the mark than that of Stornoway Productions and their ilk, had been confirmed. The internal war would continue, but Cuban forces could go home. One could only hope that other, far more dubious forms of foreign intervention (by the US and others) would also cease and peace be given a chance.

Stornowization

Far removed from any accurate reading of the facts of the Angolan situation, the Stornoway production, “Angola,” merely repeats the long-since discredited South African and Cuban-Miami version of the Angolan conflict – discredited, that is, by objective observers of all political orientations, ranging from the Georgetown University Center of Strategic Studies to *Southern Africa REPORT*. Over a period of 16 years the Cuban military mission in Angola certainly committed errors and fostered excesses, as the Arnoldo Ochoa affair revealed.[†] Historical accuracy must cut both ways: an uncritical view of Cuban policy is also unacceptable. In this sense the triumphalist style of Cuban reportage on the subject is self-defeating in its own right. Yet, in the end, what cannot be put in doubt is Cuba’s historical achievement in Angola, so apparent in its response to the desperate Angolan appeals for help in their darkest moments, and in its success in cutting the Namibian knot.

[†] Ochoa was, at one time, a prominent Cuban military official in Angola who was ultimately executed by the Cuban government for engaging in illegal activities.

Of course it would also have been useful to get a balanced picture of the Angolan actors from the Stornoway production. Although UNITA does have some ethnically-defined social base amongst the Ovimbundu, for example, this hardly makes Savimbi a majority leader, as claimed by Stornoway. Even if he were – rather improbably – supported by 100% of his people, the Ovimbundu are not a majority in Angola. Nor would one have gathered from the film that Savimbi has an astonishing reputation for cruelty, having been cited by Amnesty International for a wide range of heinous crimes, including the burning alive of women. In contrast, while MPLA can be criticized for its narrowness and rigidity, Bender gives it a passing grade by regional standards, crediting it with “a better human rights record than do many other countries, including several close US allies.” Indeed, the MPLA government is presented by Stornoway in almost as caricatured a way as are the Cubans themselves.

One could elaborate on such points, but given the overall thrust of the Stornoway production, they remain of secondary importance. For the target of “Angola” is the North American public, not the experts. And its principal message is one crafted to implant and deepen public hostility towards Cuba. By their biased presentation of this powerful documentary, the CBC and *Globe and Mail* spread this message of hate. Stornoway’s “Angola” may be a failure, if judged by the standards of historical accuracy and fairness, but the Canadian media may well have contributed to its success in helping to further isolate a small country under threat. But, of course, John Haslett Cuff and the CBC stand to lose little: Cuba is helpless to defend itself in the North American media, and it is safe and even chic to be anti-Cuban. In a complex world with many worries, Cuba has the unhappy distinction of being a comfortable scapegoat.

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