

Southern Africa

Vol. 7 No. 5

REPORT

May 1992

South Africa: The Referendum and After



Women
Transforming
the ANC

by Shireen Hassim



Angola:
The Final
Act?

by Victoria Brittain

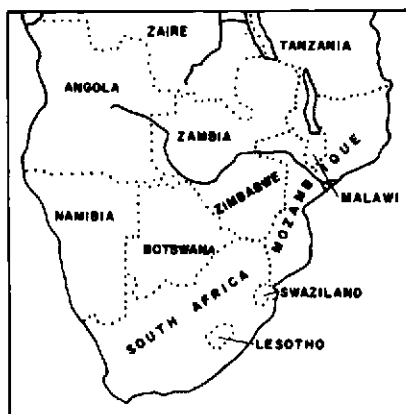


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Southern Africa REPORT

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Cover - ANC supporters at 'People's Parliament' coinciding with opening of white tricameral parliament, Cape Town, Jan. 92

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Arrest of ANC & SACP supporters at picket for replacing present government with an interim government, Supreme Court, Johannesburg, Jan. 92

Distinct Society. Not!

The day after the recent whites-only referendum on constitutional change in South Africa, Toronto's *Globe and Mail* joined a number of other newspapers in headlining President F. W. de Klerk's jubilant statement: "Today we have closed the book on apartheid!" No need to worry, our press seemed to be saying, about the actual texture of the referendum campaign itself. Yet in the last

days of that campaign de Klerk's National Party had come up with a slogan, intended to nail down its victory, that speaks volumes about the current moment in South Africa. "If you're afraid of majority-rule," the slogan ran, "vote yes."

This epitomized the tone of a campaign that, ironically, saw de Klerk's National Party wielding

the language of racial difference in the formal political arena more aggressively than at any time since the 1960's. Of course, South Africa has been a racially-structured society in the years between the 1960's and the present, but more often than not attempts have been made by the racist powers-that-be to find euphemisms to cover their political tracks. Not so

with de Klerk: since 1990 he has quite overtly promised "checks and balances" and "white vetos" in any new constitutional dispensation, the better to protect that 11% of the population which is white and which, not coincidentally, owns a staggering percentage of both South Africa's land and its wealth. As Dan O'Meara confirms in the extended interview with which we lead off the present issue, the outcome of the recent referendum merely strengthens de Klerk's hand in advancing the narrow and restrictive agenda he has set himself in dealing with the ANC and the rest of the democratic movement in South Africa.

Invoking that noted post-modernist Humpty-Dumpty, O'Meara suggests de Klerk may actually believe he is closing the book on apartheid – such is the protean nature of the concept itself. Others of us need not be so naive. Even were a genuinely democratic constitutional dispensation to be realized in South Africa, one suspects that much of what blacks in South Africa have come to think of as "apartheid" would remain in place for a considerable period of time – the racial hierarchy frozen in a structure of grossly unequal economic opportunities and reinforced by the perpetuation of white racist attitudes. But say, for sake of argument, that we restrict use of the term to its most self-evident dimensions: apartheid as formally-institutionalized and legalized racism. Ask yourself: what would a constitutionally-guaranteed "white veto" over the decision-making power of a majority-elected government – by definition, a largely black majority-elected government – represent if not a continuing institutionalization of racism?

No need to trouble de Klerk with such philological concerns. He is much more interested, as O'Meara documents, in what he can get away with in his bid to protect the essentials of the status quo. But what is one

to make of "Canada's National Newspaper," the aforementioned *Globe and Mail*, continuing, in the wake of the referendum, to do de Klerk's rationalizing for him? We warned the *Globe* in our last issue (see "Michael Valpy, Won't You Please Come Home," *SAR*, March, 1992) that its attempts to elide the claims of Quebec and of "white South Africa" together as more or less equally legitimate political expressions of "distinct societies" was a scam. Now, in the immediate wake of the referendum the *Globe* has returned shamelessly to exactly the same theme in an editorial (March 19, 1992) entitled – wait for it – "South Africa's distinct societies." (How many are there then? Start with ten or twelve Bantustans, not to forget some Coloureds and Indians, and then add ... That evil old master-builder of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd himself, would be proud indeed of the fertile imaginations of the *Globe's* editorial writers.)

The *Globe* does acknowledge that "de Klerk promised during the referendum campaign that ... he would negotiate a deal that included unbreakable guarantees of their rights as a group. This is what most whites now expect him to do." So what's the problem? "In Canada the Constitution has long accepted the validity of certain group rights in the Constitution – acknowledging Quebec's distinctiveness, for instance, by recognizing its separate civil code within the boundaries of a powerful province." Indeed, "today, Canada's whole national unity debate revolves around Quebec's demands for more group rights in the constitution, and the complex questions that inevitably follow. Do group rights compromise individual rights? What constitutes a distinct society? Will special status for one group undermine the powers of the central government? In a starkly different context [?], these are the same questions facing South Africans."

It is tempting to dismiss this analogy as merely obscene – as of course it is – and, not so merely, racist. As noted in our last issue, there are many other ways to protect language rights and the like than resort to a "white veto," although such a veto does seem a particularly promising way to keep those poor black hands off whitey's (numerous) goods and chattels. Would that the *Globe and Mail* would write it that way just once, of course. But clearly the paper thinks it's onto a winner here. Apartheid: now you see it, now you don't; enter "white veto" and come out – voilà – "distinct societies"! But the very fact the *Globe* can so milk this theme suggests the danger that it might begin to become a potent "truism" beyond the confines of the paper's editorial offices. What remains of the Canadian anti-apartheid movement must work to see that this (and other) attempts to paper over the true nature of democratic demands in South Africa are not successful here.

Credit where credit is due. Apparently the Canadian government hasn't yet bought this kind of line completely, still reluctant to give de Klerk absolutely top marks for "reasonableness" and wanting, according to External Affairs Barbara McDougall (recently in South Africa), to see more change "in practice" before backing away from sanctions altogether. But McDougall was not far behind the *Globe and Mail* in her zeal to lecture Africans in South Africa about what was good for them. In her case, however, it was not Canadian constitutional models but Canadian economic models that were front and centre. "I stressed (to ANC representatives) that they will have to reassure the West and other nations they have really and truly rejected Communism and that they are committed to a free market economy ... (*The Toronto Star*, April 7, 1992)." And she vowed "to take this issue up with Nelson Mandela" the next day!

* * *

A promise or a threat? Given the current battered state of both Canada's constitution and its economy it's difficult to know which of these two policy fronts we're least qualified to advise Mandela on. The latter was, no doubt, bemused by McDougall's effrontery. In any case, as O'Meara argues in concluding his interview, Mandela has far more immediate and pressing problems to deal with. In fact, the picture O'Meara paints is a rather bleak one, turning on the difficulties the ANC is having in pre-empting de Klerk's murky project with its own more democratic agenda. In a companion piece on CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) - albeit one written from a rather different angle of vision - Bill Fre-

und comes to his own brand of sobering conclusions about the contradictions of the current "negotiations' moment" in South Africa. Is it all gloom and doom, then? Scarcely. The negotiations - and the struggle - continue. And on some fronts relevant to building a democratic, post-apartheid South Africa, activists (ANC-linked women, for example) are actually winning some important skirmishes - as witness Shireen Hassim's helpful article on the efforts to advance a feminist agenda within the democratic movement *vis-à-vis* the negotiations process itself.

Unfortunately, it's back to "sobering" with our several pieces on the Frontline states - with Vic-

toria Brittain's bleak but necessary account of the current moment in Angola and with a further installment in Otto Roesch's on-going effort to probe beneath the surface of Renamo's war in Mozambique. But stir in a small sliver of light, perhaps, from Namibia (courtesy of Lauren Dobell's account of the recent SWAPO Congress she was quite uniquely privileged to attend), as well as useful confirmation (from Kenneth Hermele) that efforts by the southern Africa solidarity movement to rethink the premises of our work (cf. SAR's previous issue: "The New Terms of Solidarity") are afoot in Sweden no less than here. There's more going on, in short, than appears in the *Globe and Mail* - in case you were wondering.



The Nats new campaign in the townships; supporting crowd during visit of de Klerk to Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, Apr. 92

Eric Miller-Impact Visuals

The Referendum and After

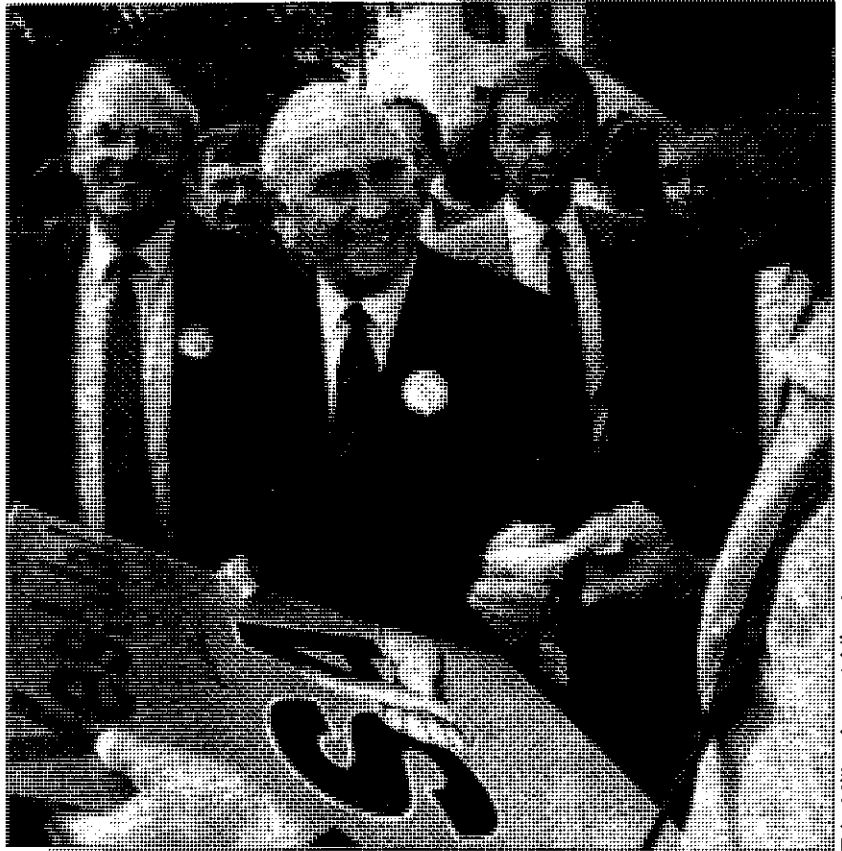
An Interview with Dan O'Meara

Dan O'Meara, a South African writer and activist who lives in Montreal and teaches at UQAM, is a long-time collaborator with Southern Africa Report. He is author of numerous books and articles on developments in South Africa, notably on the politics of Afrikaner nationalism and the National Party. SAR spoke to him in the aftermath of the recent whites-only referendum in South Africa.

Why did de Klerk call the referendum at this time?

He did it to seize the political initiative by consolidating his position on a number of fronts. First, within his own party: De Klerk is a man with extremely sensitive political feelers and he realized that his own political organization, as an organization, as an electoral force, was increasingly in disarray because of changes that P. W. Botha first introduced into the relationship between the National Party and "its" government. The N.P.'s *raison d'être* as a political force has been swamped by the presidentialism that began under Botha. So de Klerk in a sense was seeking a mandate, within the ranks of the National Party, for his own brand of presidentialism, a mandate for centralizing the political process, for taking power out of the hands of what was left of the National Party's own internally democratic processes and centring it in a very narrow band of advisors: basically himself, the Minister of Defense, and, most importantly, the Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Gerrit Viljoen, who is his link to the Broederbond.

His second target, very clearly, was the Conservative Party; he saw the need to wipe it out as an electoral force. That's crucial because he had originally proposed that he would take a



De Klerk signs autographs in referendum campaign, Stellenbosch, Mar. 92

done constitutional deal to the white electorate, something not likely to be achieved until at least mid-1993, if even then. But by mid-1993, he realized, the possibility of getting every crossed "t" and dotted "i" of a "done deal" through a whites-only referendum – the Conservative Party probably having won a number of by-elections in the meantime – was going to be significantly diminished. So instead he went for an open-ended mandate to negotiate a new constitution, unspecified, and he did so knowing

in advance that he would wipe out the Conservative Party; I'm absolutely convinced that de Klerk had a very reasonable sense within one or two percentage points of what the actual referendum result would be. He succeeded and now, as an electoral force, the Conservative Party is finished.

His third political target was the upper reaches of the security forces. There is the problem in South Africa of who controls the generals and whom do the generals control? By being able to prove

to the generals, and particularly to the police generals, that he has a mandate, he is now in a position to impose a political direction on them which they would not necessarily have accepted before. Don't forget that after Potchefstroom byelection [C. P. leader Andries] Treurnicht claimed that the de Klerk no longer had a mandate from the "white nation." Now de Klerk has added moral force, something that is crucially important in the way Afrikaner nationalist politics work. The ability of the police or the generals to put themselves forward (via a coup, for example) as the bearers of the real interests of the "white nation" has been significantly reduced. And should he wish to, de Klerk is far more able to bring the generals to order than he could before. One of his major political weaknesses has been his position *vis-à-vis* both sets of security forces and he is now immeasurably strengthened.

Audience four was the white far-right. In its own way the political culture of Afrikaner nationalism is a culture in which law, order (at least its own peculiar Calvinist notion of it), morality and popular mandates are vitally important. Whatever Eugene Terreblanche and the extremist-fascist-militant-violent right may say, the fact that de Klerk has now proven that he has a mandate has significantly sapped their hold on the far right, and fundamentally weakened, even broken, the solidity of the Conservative Party-AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) connection. The extreme far right in South African white politics has always been divided between the extra-constitutionalists and the constitutionalists, and Treurnicht is a constitutionalist. I don't think he is going to call for armed struggle! Of course, this doesn't remove the danger from the far right; in some ways isolating it may make it even more dangerous, and certainly will increase its inclination to resort to political violence. Nonetheless, in the long term

it has weakened the extremist right's ability to define some kind of hegemonic project within white politics, even on the right-wing of white politics. True, the right still has an enormous base in the police and army, but now, because of Afrikaner political culture, its moral hold is much reduced, and de Klerk knows that.

Audience five is the ANC, and, beyond the ANC, the whole negotiation process, the democratic block, the forces confronting the National Party at CODESA. The referendum immeasurably strengthens de Klerk because he wanted to be able to go to the negotiating table and say, "I have a real mandate and my bottom line is not just the bottom line of the National Party, which is a declining party, but of the majority of the white population." He will use this line even more aggressively to try to extract greater concessions from the ANC and the democratic block in the negotiations.

You suggest that had de Klerk waited another 18 months he would have had difficulty getting a more finished constitution past such a referendum. Why has he been able to finesse all the various forces you've mentioned with such success now? What explains the outcome of the referendum?

There's no short answer to that. But the first and most important reason is, quite simply, the demography of white South Africa. The majority is now comprised of middle class elements. One of the great processes over which the National Party has presided has been the urbanization and embourgeoisement of Afrikaners. They have been transformed from a rural, small town people into essentially, though not entirely, urban yuppies and their equivalents. The original social base of Afrikanerdom has become marginalized and the new Afrikaner society now sees different ways to preserve its privileges and its cultural and political bottom lines. Secondly, the referendum clearly represented a watershed moment

in the 340 years of South African colonialism. Every white racist had now to decide how my vote is going to affect my children's and my grandchildren's life in South Africa? Because if we vote "No" then we're going to have to undo what de Klerk has done since February 1990, we're going to have to engage in civil war and experience phenomenal instability and experience renewed isolation. In fact, the great success of the South African cricket team in India precisely at the time of the referendum was probably worth at least 100,000 votes to de Klerk! Beyond that the new Afrikaner bourgeoisie is anxious to renew its links to world capital; they recognize that the South African economy is in very dire straits and that something has to be done fairly rapidly for it to avoid becoming another Argentina. So the outcome is not really a surprise.

Is this the last white election?

There's no doubt of that. De Klerk has fulfilled his promise to consult the white electorate and he will not do so again.

Let's pick up on what you said about the referendum's implications for the negotiations, that it has strengthened his hand. And take note as well of one of the National Party's actual referendum slogans: "If you're afraid of majority rule, vote YES." This may seem a rather paradoxical statement for some who've been watching the proceedings without too much background knowledge. What is de Klerk's project within the negotiations process now and what how likely is he to carry it off?

I would argue that de Klerk's project hasn't really changed since February 1990. Some of the tactics and strategies have changed and there have been minor concessions. But what he calls his "bottom line," and what the Broederbond calls "the fundamentals of a new constitution to ensure the Afrikaners' survival" have not really changed. At the press conference immediately after

the referendum he stressed that the result was not going to be interpreted by him as a mandate for a rapid move to majority rule. He's used phrases like "checks and balances" and "power-sharing," saying that people who have 51% of the vote cannot have 100% of the power. This from a man who has 10% of the population and 140% of the power. He feels enormously reinforced in his vision of preserving, through constitutional mechanisms and a hold on extra-political power, the fundamentals of white and, more specifically, Afrikaner power, privilege and culture. The National Party has not yet changed its major constitutional proposals from before the launching of CODESA and those still call for an effective white veto - through a weighted senate and other mechanisms.

That's the kind of constitutional proposal de Klerk has, but, since the referendum, hasn't he also stiffened his proposals on the nature of the interim government and eventual constituent assembly that have been considered so central to the transition process?

Absolutely. The hedging is not only over the end result but it's over the process as well. Media speculation had anticipated a rapid transition to an interim government, but what de Klerk said in his first post-referendum utterance was that there will only be advisory committees. The ANC and other members of CODESA will be drawn in merely as consultative members to the existing National Party government, this latter to be thought of as "the legitimate government of a sovereign nation"! But this is totally unacceptable. As for the constituent assembly, he's now proposing an "elected body" - he hasn't used the term constituent assembly - to develop, elaborate and adopt the new constitution. That will be a bicameral body with blocking mechanisms in the upper chamber for minority groups and regional interests. In other words, the white power holders and Afrikaners in

particular. And the constitution will have to be adopted by consensus.

Meanwhile, because of its own inability to impose its demands on the government, the ANC has been forced into the role of trying to broker an agreement where each side gives up a little bit. But the regime, with its hands on the levers of power, is in a far more powerful position at the moment. And the referendum seems further to have weakened the ANC's ability to impose its own agenda both in terms of the transition process and of the eventual constitutional result.

Are you surprised that de Klerk's line on the constitution is as hard as it is? Certainly, there were some who thought in 1990 that the bourgeoisification of Afrikanerdom you mentioned earlier, and the strength of business in dictating outcomes, might allow for quite a sweeping measure of formal political democratization without the attempts to impose constitutional constraints on a majority government that we're now seeing. Such observers sensed that the goal might be to rely on economic power, not constitutional gimmickry, to determine outcomes and constrain even an ANC government from going too far in a leftward direction. But we haven't really got this kind of deracialization of capitalism on the agenda apparently. How are we to understand this?

I'm terribly dismayed by it, because I think de Klerk has blown two chances to avoid stalemate. First, when there was the euphoria and the collective outpouring of goodwill in February 1990 and now, immediately after the referendum. Both instances provided opportunities for some sort of national reconciliation. On the basis of non-racial capitalism if you like - a classic kind of neo-colonial solution - but now I'm not sure we're even going to get that. So I'm dismayed that the opportunity has been lost.

But I'm not at all surprised. Because you can't just read off the

politics of the National Party from the broad logic of the development and the requirements of South African capitalism. Call it what you will, there is something specific in the politics of Afrikaner nationalism which made it very clear to me de Klerk is not going to buy the model of "deracialized capitalism." Here his "bottom lines" come into play - these relate to cultural politics, to vetoes, and to the Afrikaner sense of their own language and they also relate to some kind of sense of residual racism - and de Klerk wants to be able to say that he held onto most of them. Certainly there will be some kind of non-racial suburbs, and black children will sit next to white children in some schools, but the fundamentals of white and Afrikaner power and privilege will have been preserved and protected in the constitution if de Klerk has his way.

So when de Klerk says in the wake of the referendum, "Today we have closed the book on apartheid," the fact is that even in the narrow sense of a formal institutionalization of racial power he's still trying, through constitutional gimmickry, to carry quite a lot of apartheid into the "new South Africa"?

In part, it's the Humpty Dumpty phenomenon. Words mean what you want them to mean. For de Klerk, when he accepts the principle of a lower house elected on a non-racial franchise, or when hospitals have been opened and when there has been, albeit in some very convoluted way, some possibility of non-racial access to schools, that's the end of apartheid. Clearly what Mandela believes to be apartheid or what the Young Lions of Soweto believe to be apartheid is something very different. It's a much more radical and extensive vision of apartheid and it's not just about who gets to sit in the House of Parliament, or even about a Senate with a veto. It's about the socio-economic legacy of the apartheid years as well. Needless to say, de Klerk and the National Party will certainly shy

very far away from any discussion of affirmative action and, yes, it has some institutionalized forms of racial privilege in mind. Afrikaner nationalism and a clinging to white privilege are at play here but I do think de Klerk will honestly see this as not having to do with apartheid. The big question, however, is whether he can force this agenda on the ANC.

Let's look at the democratic movement, then. First, in terms of the actual referendum itself, how do you think the movement handled this? Here were whites apparently voting on their own to decide the future of South Africa. Morally outrageous, certainly, and yet at another level, the ANC was almost forced to support de Klerk. How do you characterize the way in which the democratic movement responded to the referendum?

Well, I think they were outmaneuvered. As I argued earlier, calling the referendum was really a political masterstroke on de Klerk's part, putting him suddenly in control of the political agenda. And it placed the ANC on the horns of a dilemma. Clearly they had no option; they had to call on whites to vote for the National Party. If the ANC had encouraged progressive whites to boycott the referendum, de Klerk would still have won but it would have changed the psychological context of this victory. At least by having involved progressives and small "I" liberals there might exist some kind of pressure on de Klerk to acknowledge that this is not just a vote for holding on to his bottom line, but that there were other people involved in building his majority. But the fact remains: the ANC was put between a rock and a hard place.

One can also look at how the ANC dealt with the referendum campaign itself. There was a little too much unity and not enough struggle. Of course, this is easy to say from Canada. Nobody wanted to blow it, and to play into the far right's hands by frightening the

white electorate. But the broader debate within the ANC about whether negotiations represent a terrain of conflict resolution or a terrain of struggle is relevant here. And if they're a terrain of struggle, how does one go about mobilizing political forces in order to focus greater democratic pressure on the negotiations process. The ANC hasn't resolved this in part because the politics of the street



Eric Miller-Impact Visuals

ANC soldier at protest meeting for opening of white parliament, Jan. 92

are, inevitably, quite problematic. But, in addition, the combination of being legalized and then having massive violence turned against it - with Buthelezi and the police ready to kill ANC people at the drop of a hat - has fatally sapped the whole democratic movement's capacity to respond, let alone to impose its own agenda.

What about negotiations, then?

Despite what I've said, I don't think de Klerk can have it all his own

way. The ANC is still in a position to prevent his victory, but it has to do two things. First, it has to translate its moral capital into some kind of vision that captures the centre left ground, imposes its moral force on de Klerk, and reveals de Klerk's own vision to be a false and illegitimate one. That will be difficult. As you know, Barbara McDougall is running off to reward de Klerk, the EEC has lifted sanctions and the western press hails the referendum as a major victory for democracy. There is this belief that de Klerk is moving forward with due speed and good intentions; the ANC must recapture the moral highground from him

Second, the ANC has to be able to show in CODESA that there's no way around us, in part by further consolidating the forces of opposition. It has to find some way of coming to terms with the PAC, to either isolate or neutralize Buthelezi, and to establish its effective hegemony over that broad bloc of the excluded. This is not for a project of radical socio-economic transformation. It's a question, for the moment, of showing de Klerk its steel within the negotiations process, something it hasn't really been able to do since 1990; it can't just sit down have tea with him!

The ANC's bottom line must be to say: You guys can have constitutional guarantees - we will guarantee the right of Afrikaans language - and if you want to have private schools that you fund yourself you can teach your children there. Just don't expect money from the state for that or for high tech hospitals for whites while black children have no primary health care. And there has to be movement around affirmative action. And - our bottom-line - no racial vetoes, however they are structured.

Can this be achieved? De Klerk knows there can be no solution without the ANC's imprimatur; he does need the ANC to legitimize the whole transitional process, certainly.

The ANC must therefore win some significant political control within that transition – control over some important ministries, for example. True, this is not majority rule, not non-racial democracy, it is merely “power-sharing.” But the ANC has already accepted the notion of power-sharing within a five-year

transition period – as long as that “transition” is leading somewhere. A legitimate concession, perhaps, but a significant one nonetheless. It may help but I don’t think the ANC can make very many more concessions of this kind without sapping what is left of its own political capital, and should the

ANC lose its political credibility then the future for South Africa is extremely bleak.

You’ve suggested that de Klerk can’t easily impose his own white veto agenda, and you’ve suggested the difficulties of the ANC remobilizing itself to impose its own more democratic agenda on de Klerk. From the outside one gets the sense that the maximum that de Klerk is willing to offer is still well short than the minimum that the ANC can legitimately or prudently accept. Who blinks first? What are the odds that one side or the other will be able to carry most of its agenda? Is the alternative to compromise a stalemate that could see South African society falling apart?

That’s distinctly possible although I’m not sure it’s going to happen. Who blinks first? I would say that, for the past two years, the shifting balance of political forces has in de Klerk’s favour. The lifting of sanctions, the reduction of international pressure, the sapping of the ANC through violence and its own disorganization, the referendum result, all of this has shored up de Klerk’s position. So the logic of the situation tends to suggest that the ANC may have to blink first. Should it do so, however, this is not going to assist the process of realizing a less violent transition in South Africa. It will merely make things worse. So we’re back to an old political dilemma: what is likely to happen *vs.* what should happen. For a relatively less violent future (and a just one) it seems to me that de Klerk should blink first. He should make the magnanimous gesture, having won his mandate. But I don’t think he’s likely to. That’s the ongoing tragedy. We are still at an impasse.

And, although it not impossible, the ANC is not likely, to bring sufficient political force to bear to encourage him towards making that kind of concession?

I would like to think it could, I’m not sure that it can.



Eric Miller—Impact Visuals

ANC members protest opposite parliament on day of referendum results and the budget, Cape Town, Mar. 92

CODESA: The Rules of the Game

BY BILL FREUND

Bill Freund is Professor of Economic History at the University of Natal, Durban. He is the author of *The Making of Contemporary Africa and The African Worker*.

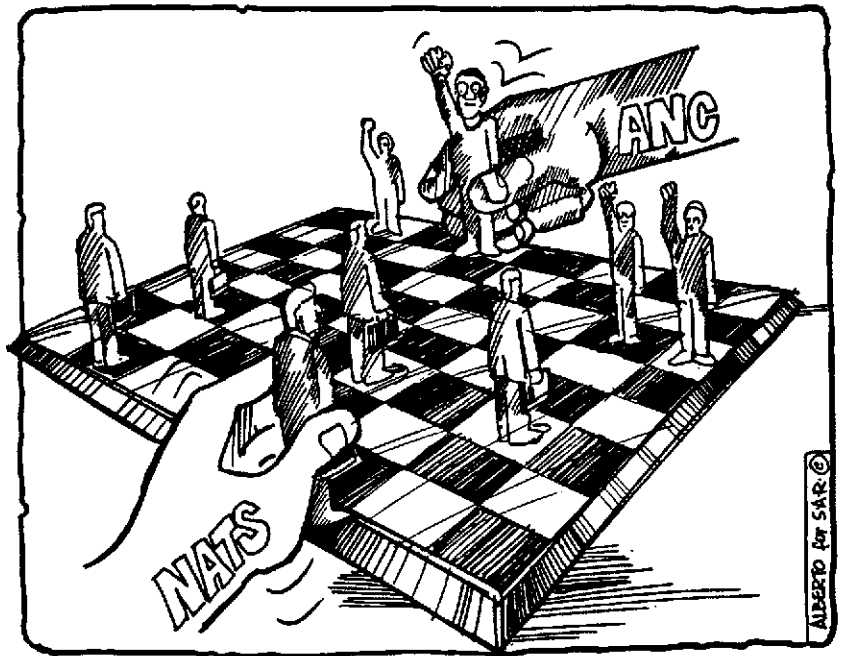
In a recent statement, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) expressed the view that South African President F. W. de Klerk's call for a white referendum this March 17 simply underlined the reality that the Convention for a Democratic South Africa is of no real importance. In a sense, they are right. For the PAC, which has rejected participation in CODESA, only a transfer of power to the black majority, as though South Africa were a settler colony ripe for decolonization, is a legitimate subject for negotiation, and CODESA is not really about that.

CODESA follows logically from the decision announced in February 1990 by de Klerk to legalize the ANC and free Nelson Mandela. There is no way such a step could have been taken without a process of negotiation. It is now fairly clear that the township uprisings of 1984-86 put paid to the possibility of a settlement under the sole auspices of the National Party. Secret negotiations began at some level by 1987 but proceeded extremely slowly and were frustrated by the insistence of the Nats that they wanted a renunciation of the use of violence and a break on the part of the ANC with their allies in the South African Communist Party (SACP). The February announcement cut through this knot. De Klerk was prepared to legalize the SACP unconditionally and let the issue of the armed struggle remain in the air, reckoning no doubt that the SACP would inevitably fall away as negotiations became more overt and substantial.

The New Deal?

1990 was the year of the big South African thaw. 1991 was the year when the major parties demonstrated their strength by flexing their muscles. 1992 is the year of "let's make a deal." The context for such a deal, in particular between the National Party and the ANC, has already been set in motion and there is good reason to believe that the specifics will be worked out in fairly short order. To comprehend such a settlement, the most important issue which needs to

heid represents simply one particular form of unequal social organization that has succeeded others, for example: slavery, Cape liberalism, segregation. The second important point is that neither of the two major players are able to unseat the other. Under P. W. Botha, the so-called total strategy was instituted as a means of ensuring a mixture of recomposing South African society, entrenching certain elements of apartheid that worked, and getting rid of others that were impractical or counter-productive. The interests of African, Coloured and Indian lead-



be acknowledged is that what is at stake is not in fact the survival or demise of apartheid.

One might argue that, in retrospect, the fate of apartheid has been sealed since 1976. What has been at stake since then has been how it should go and what should replace it. One might remember in this regard that post-1948 apart-

ers who had been created by, and co-operated with, the regime were to be promoted in particular as junior partners. The ANC by contrast moved towards a revolutionary triumphalism and increasingly fell under the intellectual hegemony of the SACP: the world of apartheid would be swept away by a successful armed struggle and/or internal in-

surrection, part of an international struggle against imperialism.

National and international events in the second half of the 1980s made it clear that neither of these dreams were to be. On the one hand, the ANC was unable to break out of the townships strategically to make the revolution. On the other, stalled attempts at reform aimed at excluding the ANC also got nowhere and the Tricameral solution of 1984 proved counter-productive even as a transitional constitutional solution. The stalemate pointed towards the necessity of these historic foes negotiating in the direction of compromise.

It was de Klerk who grasped the nettle first. Determined to create a new constitutional reality and playing in some respects a weak hand, through his boldness he has achieved success in certain important ways. The creation of the "new South Africa" is proceeding along lines of legality that confirm rather than undermine most existing institutions. This is apt to channel change along the lines of affirmative action and civil rights, American-style, rather than towards decolonization, exactly as de Klerk desires. He expressed from the start his determination to prevent South Africa from experiencing a transition like that north of the Limpopo in Zimbabwe. He is also the first leader of government since the National Party assumed power in 1948 to enjoy enthusiastic support in 'English' business circles.

What is only too clear to South Africans is that, with the decay of apartheid, the aggression, violence and hostility that have existed somewhat below the surface, have begun to manifest themselves more openly. They have a substantial capacity to drag the whole society down into a spiral of uncontrollable violence sourced from many different points of conflict. As a result, the real divide in South Africa is increasingly between those prepared to work towards some kind of deal

based on the existing balance of forces, even if it means compromise on cherished ideals, and those so angry at compromise that they are prepared to ride the whirlwind.

CODESA has sharply magnified this trend. The ANC has become a partner with the Nats (and of course the Democratic Party, acting as a facilitator) while, in an odd way, the Conservatives and the PAC have become mirror images, partners in hostility. As the Conservatives increasingly borrow the language of national liberation, boycott, rejection, armed struggle, etc., the parallels become clearer. Both Conservatives and the PAC, according to press reports, constantly suffer from the severe stress of a potential split. Both sets of nationalists fear a sell-out and being left without any piece of the pie at all. While the PAC rank-and-file apparently forced the leadership to rescind an early decision to participate in CODESA under some conditions, the Conservative party caucus has just forced their leadership to agree to participate in de Klerk's white referendum.

One of the most interesting and indeterminate aspects of the present process is the position of perennial business world favourite Mangosuthu Buthelezi. In 1991, it appeared that the state supported the idea of a troika regime - de Klerk, Mandela, Buthelezi - with the conservative black leader in a crucial fulcrum position. In the context of the numerous parties represented at CODESA, this prospect has disappeared and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) support for CODESA in its present form is rather cool. Buthelezi has worries because his electoral support base, outside of rural areas and some squatter communities in Natal, is extremely suspect. Polls actually suggest that the National Party might have more African supporters than Inkatha. A recent flurry of press speculation even suggested that Buthelezi might choose to abandon Inkatha in favour of his representing the Kwa Zulu

homeland although he has denied the rumours. He has vigorously supported the claims of his nephew, the Zulu king, to be represented at CODESA but this would undoubtedly be countered by the ANC demanding that chiefs more supportive of themselves also be brought in. While the government has supported the IFP line on the king, it does not seem to be exerting any very substantial pressure on his behalf.

Raising the stakes

This brings one to the question of what is actually at stake at CODESA. The CODESA negotiations are not by any means uninteresting or unimportant. A major issue is federalism. The ANC has conceded the necessity for some sort of regional government and its SACP allies have also suggested that regions could have inherent powers apart from those derived from the centre. But how far are they prepared to go? Very strong regional authorities represent an enormous potential brake on the power of a central government to restructure South African society. How much financial power and what sort of control over areas such as education or the police would remain with the centre?

The question of the re-incorporation of the so-called independent homelands and the form with which the others, such as Kwa Zulu, will be dealt is unresolved and tricky. One of the former category, Bophuthatswana, has participated in CODESA but refused to sign its declaration of intent: Lucas Mangope has no interest in political suicide. Will he be allowed to preside over the electoral process deciding on re-incorporation in Bophuthatswana? A number of other homeland leaders, most notably Bantu Holomisa of the Transkei, birthplace of so many ANC leaders, are leaning towards the ANC, but won't they exact a price in return? If Transkei or Lebowa continues to exist, why not Kwa Zulu?



Brett Eloff-Afrapix/Impact Visuals

Inkatha supporters outside hostel, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, 1991

Constitutionally, the Nats will argue that regional representation, with a large weighting for significant but losing groupings, should form the basis of an upper house in the legislature to balance the directly (but proportionately) elected lower house. They are also campaigning for a presidency to rotate amongst major parties. While unlikely to achieve all these goals, (de Klerk has himself compared them to the first offer the seller is apt to put on a house sale), they may well get some.

Another salient issue is that of language policy. In a rare intervention on the subject, a government minister recently expressed the view that the status of Afrikaans in South Africa is not negotiable. In fact, bilinguality with an emphasis on Afrikaans in white South Africa has enormously empowered Afrikaners and the issue is of considerable importance. In theory the ANC at present opposes any favouritism in

terms of the languages spoken in the country and has an equal language policy.

Interesting as well will be the way CODESA resolves issues attached, in current South African political parlance, to "civil society." There may well be a Bill of Rights, but it is not clear on what basis it would be judicable. There are likely to be very substantial guarantees of institutional independence and self-governance. The powerful trade union movement should certainly hope to expect the right to organize and to strike, material advances for workers and possibly some encouragement for entering into a social contract.

COSATU has in fact been very divided on whether to become a late participant in CODESA. The main proponents of participation have been those defining themselves as being on the left, trying to keep the less disciplined cadres of the

ANC in line and the leadership on their toes. Others have argued that the negotiations at this level are only suitable for political parties and that COSATU will have to defer to the ANC leadership in any event in this kind of situation.

During 1991, the ANC appeared to recover a certain militancy and initiative through mass action campaigns culminating in a hugely successful two day general strike to protest the introduction of a Value Added Tax. However, while this recovery has no doubt concentrated the minds of government ministers on the underlying loyalty of most black South Africans to the ANC, it has not proved possible to translate mass action into real strategic gain. Even on the tax issue the ANC only discovered and interested itself at a very late stage.

Despite the popularity of demands for a directly-elected constitutional assembly and an interim

government, in the end the ANC has settled for a process of secret negotiation at CODESA that they clearly would like to be binding. Once the deal is struck, the constitutional assembly can be elected and meet but only to ratify what has been agreed to. It also seems clear that a coalition interim government is a sure thing. The Nats have hinted that they expect such a government to stay in the harness for many years. At the moment, the ANC finds this unacceptable as an idea but they may shift their position here, too, as time goes on. It also looks imperative that CODESA come up with a settlement sooner rather than later before South Africa's social glue dries up entirely.

CODESA is a process, which by its very nature can only make those who have fought against apartheid fairly uneasy. Undoubtedly it will enshrine the principle of a unified South Africa with a legislature

embodying popular sovereignty and with no racial laws. However, it is a negotiation of 'leaders' without clear mandates behind closed doors. Although in reality both Nats and the ANC have effective veto power, the representation gives an amazing amount of influence to relatively or very conservative politicians of colour, the Coloured Labour Party (whose leader, Alan Hendrickse, now unceremoniously dumped by the Nats from leadership in the House of Representatives, gave probably the most impressive of the opening speeches, cleverly mixing resistance and moderation into a unique Hendrickse brew,) the homeland politicians, etc., to water down demands in their own favour. Accepting participation in CODESA with delight, they seem like one creation of apartheid with real staying power at the moment. Of the nineteen CODESA parties, only the SACP and the Natal/Transvaal Indian Congress

delegations are entirely in the ANC camp. The danger is that white fear and selfishness will build up a store of resentment by blocking change through making it impossible for a new government to act energetically in reshaping social or economic institutions.

On the other hand, the alternative, intensifying conflict leading to civil war with uncertain results, is horrific. The best outcome for CODESA is one that will serve to provide some new glue, beginning the job of binding South Africa together in a new and minimally acceptable way and opening up doors to a further democratization and social development of the country down the line. In addition, CODESA may help to enshrine and legitimate the autonomy of institutions that the left may be eager to support. For this reason, it is winning much broader support than might be thought the case overseas, especially amongst supporters of the struggle against apartheid.



ANC members at mass meeting on parliament's budget day, Cape Town, Mar. 92

Eric Miller—Impact Visuals



Rafa Mayet-Afrapix/Impact Visuals

National launching of ANC Women's League, Currie's Fountain, Durban, Aug 90

The Gender Agenda: Transforming the ANC

BY SHIREEN HASSIM

Shireen Hassim is a member of the ANC Women's League and researcher at the Centre for Social and Development Studies, University of Natal, Durban

"The ANC will never be the same," said Nelson Mandela commenting on the heated debate at the July 1991 ANC conference on the proposed 30% quota for women on the National Executive Committee. After several hours of angry debate and caucusing during which it became

apparent that the proposal would be rejected by delegates (only 17% of whom were women), the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) withdrew the proposal. Nevertheless, many analysts agreed with Mandela that the raising of the issue had fundamentally challenged the ANC's commitment to women within the organization. Many argued that the ANC could no longer ignore the absence of women in its decision-making structures.

But has the ANC really changed? Six months after the Women's League's quota proposal was rejected, not one woman was included on the ANC team at the CODESA (Congress for a Democratic South Africa) preparatory meeting. In fact, all 60 delegates from 19 parties were men. At CODESA 1, the first round of talks, fewer than 7% of the delegates were women.

The quota issue

The quota debate and its aftermath acutely highlighted the low level of women's participation in political processes. For the ANCWL, there are two related aspects to this issue. First, the role of the ANCWL within the ANC came into sharp focus – was it to continue as “handmaiden” of national liberation or did it have a gender-based struggle of its own to wage? This once abstract question has become a reality for the ANCWL, as it attempts to establish an identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The ANC's public position on women has become more progressive, most notably in the May 2, 1990 “Emanicipation of Women” statement, in which the ANC recognized the need for a separate and relatively autonomous women's organization (see *SAR* Vol. 6 No. 4.). But such pronouncements have come from the top, through the active lobbying of a few powerful women, a small core of black feminists who have made some inroads with the leadership. Strong and respected individuals such as Frene Ginwala have consistently pointed out the ANC's exclusion of women from important decision-making committees. The pronouncements of the leadership, however significant symbolically, have rarely translated into a meaningful shift in the lower ranks of the organization. It is becoming more apparent to the Women's League that there is a need for some kind of mechanism within the organization to ensure that women participate fully.

The second aspect is a more immediate one of making a direct impact on the shape of the new South Africa. The dissatisfaction about the Women's League's exclusion from the negotiation process became immediately apparent. In an unprecedented action, some leading members of the League wrote to the press demanding that the ANC address its failure to include women. At an ANCWL workshop in January, delegates de-

manded that the ANC put more women into the negotiations commissions at CODESA. By March 1992, the issue had become more widespread, with Helen Suzman, matriarch of the Democratic Party, castigating CODESA. An advertisement demanding greater participation of women at CODESA was placed in the newspapers by a wide range of groups and individuals, from the principals of several universities to Suzanne Vos, public relations director for the Inkatha Freedom Party. There can be little doubt that women's marginalization from politics is being challenged as never before. For the ANCWL, these developments have clearly outlined the dilemma of having to struggle on two fronts, within the ANC, as well as within broader national politics, where its interests are sometimes closer to those of women in other parties than of the men in the ANC.

The debate at the consultative conference in July 1991 started a discussion within the ANC, even among those sympathetic to the Women's League, about whether or not a quota was the best mechanism to achieve the full participation of women in the ANC. Those in favour of a quota pointed to the low level of participation of women in the ANC leadership. In August 1991 (after the controversial conference) there were nine women in an elected NEC of 55; two women on the 26-person National Working Committee and one woman on the nine-person Military Headquarters. As the ANC journal *Mayibuye* (September 1991) commented, “Surely after decades of struggle, with all the women's activities in the national liberation movement at home and abroad, the ANC cannot argue that there are no women lawyers (except one) for its Constitutional Committee, no women for its army, no women to head its departments and so few qualified for leadership! While women cadres were there with the necessary qualities and qualifications, they were not elected.” The

quota proposal was also politically important because it represented the only organized position within the League on mechanisms for increasing women's participation.

On the other hand, Cheryl Carolus, a member of the National Working Committee and a member of the United Women's Congress in Cape Town in the early 1980's, criticized the Women's League for its proposal for a greater role for women in leadership. She argued that the resolution is a “short cut ... we need to work through our branches first to get our mandate. Our problem is not the relatively conscious men in the top committees, but the lack of a grassroots understanding of gender issues” (*The Rock*, p. 3). Nkosazana Zuma, chairperson of the Women's League in Natal, agrees that it is important for women to be seen to be taking up issues at all levels, and to be participating meaningfully on all issues rather than simply those relating to women. She argues that “It is important that women get elected as people who can take up a broad range of issues; in this way women's participation will increase.”

Yet, as Durban Central Women's League chairperson Pat Horn has pointed out, the ANC delegates at the consultative conference had no qualms about accepting a quota for Umkhonto we Sizwe officials, even though their involvement in other political issues was minimal. Moreover, affirmative action has been part of official ANC policy on socio-economic development ever since the consultative conference; some in the ANC hope to use this precedent to also press for increased women's involvement within the organization itself. Frene Ginwala, arguing for a consideration of this position, suggests that a proposal of simple quotas as recommended by the Women's League might have the negative consequence of becoming a measure of the upper limit of women's participation, rather than expanding it. Other feminist critics within the

League have argued that a quota does not ensure that the women who get elected will be particularly sensitive to women's interests, and their presence might instead become an "alibi" for the ANC to avoid the problem. Unless the women elected in terms of a quota have a base in women's politics, they may well become alienated from the female membership and be relatively unaccountable to that base. Another concern for feminist members is that the women's quota will be telescoped into a "Women's Ministry" in the future new government, which has certain merits but also the undoubted problem of "ghettoizing" women's issues from the mainstream flow of policy decisions and more important, budget resources.

Developments since the conference

These debates suggest that, although the League failed to secure support for its resolution, the quota proposal has been politically educative for women (and perhaps some men too!). It has also resulted in subtle but important changes in gender relations within the ANC, according to Anne Vincent, policy development co-ordinator for the League. She believes that since the quota debate, further initiatives by the Women's League have developed in the male leadership a greater political respect for women. She sees a greater commitment to the gender issue in the ANC, and a change in the internal culture of the organization. Thus, for example, many men in the ANC were upset about the letter written to the press by the Women's League members, seeing it as a breach of organizational discipline, but they were cautious in criticizing the women involved. Anne Vincent says: "It is becoming unacceptable not to take account of gender."

At the same time, work on the quota issue appears to have been uneven in the Women's League. The League has accepted that, having lost the battle at national level,

the struggle needs to be taken up at local and regional levels by Women's League structures. However, the national office has not devised strategies to implement this or to monitor the success of its local structures. Yet the experience of struggling to implement a quota at branch level could be instructive about where and how obstacles are being placed in the ANC. For example, in the Durban Central branch of the ANC, the chairperson tried to stop a Women's League resolution to implement a quota from being put onto the agenda of a meeting because it was "unconstitutional" (having been rejected at national level). Other members of the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) were more amenable, but wanted to discuss it under the broad heading of affirmative action. Eventually it did get onto the agenda, but so low down that time ran out before it could be discussed.

Nevertheless, there has been some success at the branch level, where women are on the whole more influential than at the national level. In practice, Durban Central has had at least 30% women on its executive. With the inclusion of the Women's League and Youth League representatives, activists elected on their own merits, the BEC has 50% women. In the Highway branch (also in Durban), the Branch Executive Committee tried to stop women from even forming a branch of the Women's League, on the basis that as it was a small branch (about 150 members) a separate women's structure would be divisive and would deplete resources. The women went ahead anyway.

These examples, although not necessarily representative, bear out Cheryl Carolus' claim that it is the men at the lower levels of the organization who have to be convinced of the need to take women and women's issues more seriously. The need for more strategic and united interventions by Women's

League branches at this level is very clear, and the regional leadership of the League will have to begin to formulate ways of facilitating links between branches. At the same time, it is also evident that at branch level and at national level, there are many women who, like Carolus herself, are worthy leadership figures for the ANC as a whole, not only for the Women's League.

Restructuring head office

In the past year, the national office of the Women's League has been significantly reorganized and structures have been put in place to make it work more efficiently. There has been a division of portfolios and responsibilities, with the international desk (which previously took up most of the work of the League) now falling under the president's office. In a significant move, indicative of the new assertive attitude within the League, a policy and projects co-ordinator has been appointed in the Secretary General's office. This office is also planning to set up a resource centre. The national organizer, responsible for campaigns, political education and regional co-ordination, will have the all-important task of implementing the national Women's Charter campaign which plans to elicit from women across the country a mandate for the issues and demands that they want most to see addressed.

In addition to these structural changes, the first issue of a news bulletin, *The Rock* (from "Strydom, you have touched the women, you have struck a rock," a battle cry of women resisting the imposition of the pass laws in the 1950s), has just been published. This is the first time that the Women's League has had a separate mouthpiece inside South Africa. The bulletin deals with a wide range of issues, from women organizing against abuse of women and children in squatter camps, to contraception, to "green issues." "Women's concerns" are clearly portrayed in the bulletin as consisting of more than national liberation issues.



Andrew Courtney-Impact Visuals

An informal "strategizing group" has been set up in Johannesburg, consisting of academics and professionals as well as women activists, as a forum to brainstorm around immediate political issues facing women. The strategizing group facilitated the production of an impressive submission to CODESA, in which the Women's League indicated the gender issues which faced each of the working committees and suggested ways of resolving them. As a result, the Women's League has been able to make an impact on national processes in a way that it has been too disorganized to do before. Similar initiatives are being discussed in Durban and Cape Town, to strengthen regional structures of the League.

The strategic option facing the League is obviously not a stark choice between other national in-

terventions or grassroots campaigns. Both should happen in tandem, and can, with the new division of responsibilities. Clearly, however, the rapid developments in constitutional negotiations demand that the Women's League act in a strategic fashion, pressing for women's issues to be taken into account when framing crucial new legislation such as the Bill of Rights and the new constitution.

In this respect the League has responded creatively to the challenge. In response to women's exclusion from CODESA, the Women's League decided to apply for status at CODESA separately from its parent body, hoping that once they were admitted, they could apply party political pressure around gender issues. They also anticipated that they would be able to lobby/caucus with women from other parties so as to be effective.

When a Women's League delegation approached the ANC's Negotiations Committee to inform them of the League's plans, the majority of committee members were extremely unhappy. One negotiator argued that CODESA was dealing with political issues, and as the Women's League didn't know about politics and was not a political organization, its representation was inappropriate. Other members, more sensitive to developments in the Women's League, were more supportive and tried to look for compromise solutions. The Women's League delegation argued that the decision to apply separately was not a retaliatory attempt to embarrass the ANC for excluding women from its delegation, but was a strategy to make CODESA structures more representative. They noted that COSATU, an ANC ally, had also applied to join separately. However, they agreed

to rethink their position on separate representation.

The issue was taken up in the Women's League's strategizing group, with very creative results. The group recommended, and the ANC officially accepted, an alternative proposal to push for a Gender Advisory Group at CODESA. It was envisaged that the Gender Advisory Group would be a sub-committee of the CODESA Management Committee and would evaluate all decisions of the Working Groups for their gender implications. The Women's League has found broad support for the idea among political parties at CODESA. The National Working Committee also agreed that within the ANC's backup task force groups for each CODESA commission, there would be at least one woman. In effect, the organizational gains for the Women's League were quite significant.

Stop Press:

CODESA has agreed to the formation of the Gender Advisory Committee as part of its official structures.

Coalition of women's groups

The alliance of women's groups in South Africa, discussed informally for well over a year, has finally emerged. A wide range of organizations are participating, including political organizations, church groups and women's lobbying groups. The alliance will be known as the National Coalition. There is already an interim committee in place, consisting of representatives from various organizations. An immediate focus for the alliance is the drawing up of the "women's charter" of demands, originally the brainchild of the Women's League. In some areas, such as Natal, the alliance is specifically constituted around the charter, as common ground still needs to be gained among the various affiliates.

A national workshop is planned for April 25, to discuss the nuts and bolts of the Women's Charter Campaign and to look especially at how women can have an impact on CODESA.

The ANCWL emphasizes that it is a women's charter, not an ANC charter. Nkosazana Zuma, key facilitator in discussions between the Women's League and the Inkatha Freedom Party's Women's Brigade, reiterates that it is important for all organizations who are part of the coalition to feel comfortable with it. This reassurance has become especially important as the alliance appears to be on the brink of persuading the Inkatha Women's Brigade to join. So far, their participation looks confirmed, even though they refused to join a march to launch the alliance in Durban.

The inclusion of the Inkatha Women's Brigade in the alliance has met with some criticism in the Durban townships. Some women (and men) are questioning the political wisdom of this move, given the continuing violence in the townships and the obstacles that Buthelezi is placing in the way of the CODESA process. The murmurings about this issue highlight another danger for the Women's League: that it has not adequately explained to its members the purpose of the alliance and that there is a possibility that it will be seen as an urban, middle class forum. A young woman activist I spoke to wanted to know how an alliance would help to build the Women's League - "aren't we simply dissipating our energies?" she asked. For her, it was also difficult to envisage working with Inkatha members in any capacity. At this stage the ANCWL has not mobilized its publicity around the alliance particularly well; however, forthcoming issues of *The Rock* will be an important vehicle for communication between the Women's League national office and membership.

If properly co-ordinated between the regions, branches and head of-

fice, the Women's Charter campaign has the potential to be an important conscientizing mechanism, uniting women around issues which affect them. What appears to be happening, ironically, is that women's marginalization from political processes at this time has united women far more broadly than other common experiences such as motherhood. This too, makes a radical break with the nationalist tradition, in which motherhood and nation were at the core of the Women's League's mobilization strategy.

In addition to the Women's Charter campaign, Policy Development co-ordinator Anne Vincent sees two immediate thrusts to Women's League activities - building organization and developing policy for the ANC. In the latter case, the Women's League hopes to intervene more successfully in current policy debates by doing its own research on "women's issues." The Women's League has been successful in ensuring that there will in principle be a League representative at all policy-making meetings.

Many League officials have argued that one of the most important lessons to be learnt from the quota debate is that women need to be seen to be active on more than gender issues. Vincent claims that the League will be encouraging its members to get onto all the structures of the ANC, particularly in the rural areas. However, the organizational weakness of the League continues to be a factor preventing bold strategies such as this.

What is emerging most clearly from the experiences of the past eight months is that the League is beginning to define its own programme of struggle. The extent to which it will be able to pursue this, given its structural position as an arm of the ANC, will depend in part on the courage with which it is prepared to confront obstacles and contradictions. For many of its members, the League stands on the brink of an exciting battle.

Angola: The Final Act?

BY VICTORIA BRITAIN

Victoria Britain is SAR's Angola correspondent.

The final act of Angola's valiant effort to define a genuinely independent post-colonial project is being played out in the internationally-supervised peace process designed to culminate in United Nations-assisted elections in September 1992. It is an act as violent, ugly and confused as was the depraved experience of Portuguese colonialism itself. An overwhelming sadness at a historical opportunity irrevocably lost now emanates from the idealists, revolutionaries and fighters whose vision of independent Angola inspired their country, their region and many beyond their continent.

The great sacrifices of three decades can find no validation in whatever comes out of this peace process. Like the end of the Sandinistas' Nicaragua, Maurice Bishop's Grenada or Thomas Sankara's Burkina Faso, the brief years of Angola and its vision of a revolutionary alternative third world - based on socialism, the development of human potential, multi-racism and non-alignment - have slipped away. The mass media has played a significant role in distorting international understanding of what imperialism has done to Angola over the last three decades. Now it re-writes history and threatens to obscure the cynicism of the main actors in this last act, none of whom are Angolan - the United States, the U.N. and Portugal.

Cubans a bulwark against anarchy

With hindsight, looking back to the eve of independence in 1975, it is clear that the arrival of the first Cuban fighting contingent on October 4 did more than just push back the South African offensive launched to take Luanda before

independence in November. For 15 years, the Cubans were the MPLA's bulwark against the anarchy which threatened Angola then as now. They were also, of course, the U.S.'s cold war incentive to break the MPLA at whatever the cost to the country.

In the mid-1980s, Washington began linking the South African occupation of Namibia, the Cuban troops in Angola and the ANC military training camps in Angola with the political and economic



options of all the countries in the region. Since that time, it has been inevitable that Angola would pay a high price for the independence of Namibia. As with the 1984 Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique, the Namibian peace was cynically gutted of its content by one side. The U.S. and South Africa merely used the new circumstances to transform their aid pattern - from Namibia to Zaire, from the South Africans to the CIA to Jonas Savimbi's Unita. The result was that Savimbi was able to confront the peace process militarily stronger than at any time since his movement

began its long collaboration, first with the Portuguese military before independence in 1975, and then with the South African Defence Force after it.

U.N. stance undermined peace accord

The May 1991 peace agreement signed in Estoril, Portugal between the MPLA and Unita provided for a 15 month transition to multi-party elections. A ceasefire was to lead to the cantonment of the two armies and their arms, then the creation of a unified army, with 250,000 soldiers demobilized. The government's territorial administration would be extended into all the areas controlled by Unita, and the whole country would be opened to pluralist political activity. A U.N. operation was to monitor the agreement.

At the basis of the agreement was the international community's decision to treat the two parties - MPLA and Unita - as equally legitimate in the transition from war to peace. This meant, for instance, that the U.N. technical assistance for the election couldn't go to the government; it had to go to a neutral electoral commission in which Unita was to have equal weight with the government. This studied U.N. neutrality has allowed Unita's progressive violation of the peace accords to go almost unseen outside Angola.

The extremely bitter fighting of the last days of the war was a bad omen. Even western diplomats in Luanda agree that Unita made desperate attempts to seize new territory, particularly the provincial capital of Luanda in Moxico. "Why were Unita expending so much to take over areas which they would, according to the agreement, have to relinquish to government control to organize the election?" asked one western diplomat a year after

the heavy fighting of the spring of 1991. The answer, according to Unita officers who later defected, was that Savimbi planned to move his headquarters from the southern remoteness of Jamba to the eastern town of Luana which would be declared an alternative capital to Luanda. In addition, it would have easy access for U.S. supplies through Zaire if the war were to start again.

This was just one of the many signs that indicated Savimbi's ambivalence about the political path opened up by the peace. At the ceasefire, Unita held one-third of the country's municipalities and communes, and by late March 1992, only half of those had been returned to government control. In the remaining areas, the government is unable to send in administrators, and even U.N. personnel are unable to move freely. "Where we can't register, we

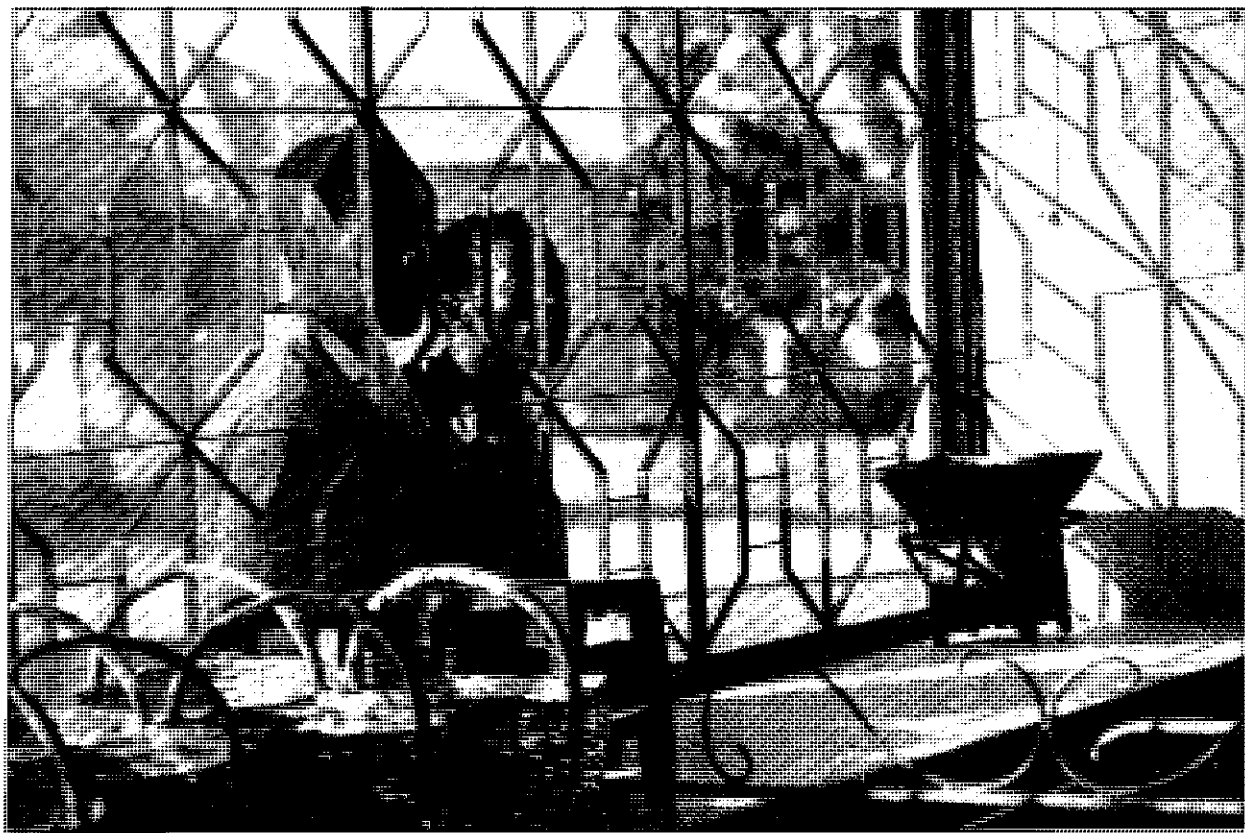
can't have an election," said Lopo de Nascimento, Minister for Territorial Administration.

Food aid becomes Unita pawn

In the area of Jamba itself, U.N. supervision of food aid is not very rigorous. U.N. supplies for half a million people (Unita's estimate) are brought in from Namibia and directly handed to Unita by the U.S.-based charities World Vision and CARE, and a German charity called Stittung Rilfe in Not (Aid on Want), well-known in Europe as a Unita lobbying organization. Unita's population figures are not verified by any independent organization, and government sources put the likely population of the war zone of Cuando Cubango at 30,000 to 40,000. The U.N. emergency operation is run by the former Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner, Dawit

Wolde Giorgis, who took political asylum in the U.S. when he defected from Colonel Mengistu's government after the great Ethiopian famine. The operation is not saving dying children but is an important part of the political jigsaw which will determine Unita's weight in the next phase of Angola's history. U.N. officials only speak to journalists off the record, and most express deep unease at the way they see the U.N.'s operations - both the emergency food supply and the military monitoring - having become, as one put it, "driven by the Americans." The loss of sovereignty for the government of Angola is palpable.

The U.N.'s silence on other aspects of Unita activities is part of the same pattern. In one known Unita area, Quilengues in Huila province, four young British tourists



No goods to be seen in shop windows, Lubango, 1990

were killed at a roadblock. Two were shot in cold blood in early 1992. In one incident in March, four officers of Angola's FAPLA forces were murdered by Unita variously by being buried alive, by being burned alive and by being shot in the head. Meanwhile, in the military cantonments, the Unita forces awaiting demobilization were reported by many sources to be mainly very young or old.

The backbone of Unita forces were sent into towns and villages across the country in civilian clothes. Since the ceasefire, the U.N. have received many reports of murders like those of the FAPLA officers and of government officials, harassment of the population by expelling them from their homes or beatings of those sporting MPLA t-shirts, and seizure of police and other administrative compounds.

Unconfirmed reports from diplomatic sources say that Unita crack units number between 3,000 and 5,000 in Zaire. Unita arms caches have been found by local people in many areas and reported to the U.N. None of Unita's heavy weapons, like the American Stinger missiles, had been brought into the cantonments by late March.

The climate of fear and tension across the country has been exacerbated by the desertion from the cantonments of tens of thousands of government FAPLA troops. They are demoralized by the very poor conditions and unwilling to wait for formal demobilization that would give them back pay, a pension for several months and possible entry into work for food programs being prepared by western donors. Unita has blamed incidents like that at Quilengues on these men, an explanation readily accepted by much of the western press, and another example of the U.N. mission's unwillingness to clarify publicly what is going on.

Unita defectors expose infighting

The question of Savimbi's real intentions in this period was posed sharply by the defection from Unita in February 1992 of his right-hand man for 30 years, General Nzau Puna, and of General Tony da Costa Fernandez, once a key conduit for CIA money to Unita. "I do not wish to be responsible for what is going to happen," Nzau Puna said, as he sought political asylum in Portugal. The two men accused Savimbi of dictatorial behaviour, grotesque human rights violations and the murder of Unita officials, Titi Chingunji and Wilson dos Santos, and their families. The murders occurred in August 1991 on the eve of Unita's return to Luanda under the peace agreement. But the most significant part of their statements - Nzau Puna's indirect warning of destabilization, if not worse, of the peace process - was little noticed outside Angola.



Anna Zieminski-Afrapix/Impact Visuals

Fernandez also charged that a secret army was being kept in Jamba.

The two officials were immediately expelled from Unita and in a series of counter-charges, Savimbi accused them of killing Chingunji and dos Santos. This evidence of serious disarray in the organization groomed for so long by Washington as the disciplined, democratic alternative to the MPLA, was initially shrugged off by U.S. sources. It was interpreted as mere in-fighting which would neither significantly affect Unita's image outside nor have repercussions internally, but Secretary of State James Baker then wrote to Savimbi asking for a reply to the charges.

The crisis in Unita triggered by the transition from war machine to political contender was already too deep for such easy dismissals. From the start, the several hundred Unita officials attached to the verification teams were kept under tight control from Jamba. Their families were not allowed to accompany them to their new postings. They were under strict instructions not to fraternize with non-Unita people, even family members they were likely to encounter when posted, as most were, to their original home areas. For those suspected of any such attempt to re-enter normal Angolan society, the reward was immediate recall to Jamba and an uncertain fate.

One who refused to return, and who instead defected to the MPLA, was Captain Abel Coji, a 42 year old Unita veteran and former Portuguese army recruit. Having heard of two other captains, a major and a general being recalled and then not being seen again, Coji chose not to go back to Jamba, though certain he thus condemned his family to death. It was a desperate choice he made, he says, "so that I do not die for nothing, but help to expose what Unita is - an arrogant, racist dictatorship."

Coji's testimony of his years of living with Unita confounds the

public relations image of Unita so carefully built up. He told stories of living on pillage, with a wife captured from MPLA territory, of training in Namibia for the joint units with the South Africans fighting SWAPO, of life in Jamba supervised and regulated, and of 21 women accused of plotting against Savimbi being burned alive. His testimony confirms the detail of Unita's real past, previously exposed in research by people like American scholar and author, William Minter.



Margaret A. Novicki-Africa Report/Impact Visuals

Other Unita dissidents such as Jorge Chicoti, who heads the small new party Angolan Democratic Forum (FDA), paint an identical picture.

To men coming from the tightly-controlled and cashless society of Jamba, the impact of the newly-liberal atmosphere under the MPLA has been stunning. The new unified army is being trained by the Portuguese, with support from Britain, at the military academy in Huambo. Reports from there say that after months of total isolation, except during the courses, some of the Unita officers began to accept a cup of coffee or even a weekend evening trip to a nightclub from their MPLA counterparts. MPLA

officers' habits of casual criticism of government and party were a severe psychological shock to Unita personnel, the impact of which is incalculable. The unreadiness of these men - Unita's best - for life in a pluralist society is clear and ominous. "Unita has a totalitarian conception. They can't accept that where they are there can be other opinions," said Lopo de Nascimento, one of the historic figures of the MPLA, who having played a key part in both the negotiations and the transition period, was given a top position in the party to fight the election.

Reconciliation within MPLA

The MPLA itself launched an important program of reconciliation with former members who were ousted or who resigned in the fierce in-fighting and purges which have been part of the MPLA's history since its inception. "The Big MPLA Family" was officially inaugurated at a rally in Luanda's football stadium in early March. It was an emotional moment for many and the first gathering for years to reunite some of those who had suffered harsh party discipline in the past. Notably absent were the capital's youth, a new generation to fight a new political fight. And few are confident that in the devastated countryside, where the MPLA presence has often been a poor resource for desperate people in recent years, there could be an enthusiastic electoral response to the party. As a symbol of how serious is the quest for reconciliation, nothing could be more striking than the MPLA's invitation to Daniel Chipenda to become vice-president of the party. Chipenda led the Eastern revolt against Agostinho Neto before independence. Against him are his past associations with every opponent of the MPLA, including the South Africans and the FNLA, but in his favour is his ethnic base - Ovimbundo, like the FNLA.

A vacuum of power between the two big parties threatens. The

FNLA of Holden Roberto, though with a strong ethnic base among the Bakongo and an apparently growing support in Luanda, remains small and is generally expected to ally itself with Unita.

The doyen of new third world party politics is former honorary MPLA president, Joachim Pinto de Andrade, leader of the Democratic Renovation Party (PRD). He has been an MPLA dissident since 1974 when he was part of the Active Revolt group. "These two political forces do not have the political or moral authority to represent the people," he says of Unita and the MPLA. "The two destroyed the country in this war. Unita with physical destruction and the MPLA with corruption and arrogance. The population is exhausted and the young have no confidence in either." But the PRD, like the other 27 or so small parties, despite receiving some state funds, has no chance of making a serious political impact in the few short months before the planned September election. The broken

infrastructure, Unita's blocking of access to significant areas, and above all the shortage of resources, confine them effectively to urban areas. "Unita has had so much support from the Americans over the years, and the MPLA has state funds," says Andrade, "including the sale of oil ahead of production for the next two years."

De Andrade, like the government, wanted the election date to be postponed at least a few months to give the country a chance to start some real political organizing for the country's future. But Unita, and the Americans, have pushed for the earliest possible date. For the MPLA, a longer period would have meant a chance perhaps to separate the party's image from that of the government, which is, on the whole, extremely negative. Allegations of government incompetence and corruption are frequently carried in the press, now impressively transformed from its earlier wooden format to a lively independent part of civic soci-

ety. Such grave allegations are impossible for an outsider to verify. But they are repeated in every embassy and in the everyday talk even of party militants. Reports are legion too of poor morale and an unprincipled scramble to buy and sell on the part of former FAPLA officers who life's work seems invalidated by this peace. The same cynicism is current among the youth who flock to the new beachside cafes and to new nightclubs full of international peace keepers with their radio phones.

The mood in Luanda today does not lend itself to analyzing the profound repercussions of this peace, nor to recognizing the determining role in the future which the Americans will undoubtedly play. They will eventually decide to back one or other Unita faction, or FNLA, or both, or even a faction within the MPLA to fill the political vacuum. It is clear that the historic struggle against imperialism which marked Angola for three decades is over for now.



Children push ex-soldiers, crippled during the war; Lubango 1990

John L. Heilbrunn/Associated Press

The SWAPO Congress

BY LAUREN DOBELL

Lauren Dobell is a graduate student in Political Studies at Queen's University. She is writing a dissertation on SWAPO's development philosophy and recently spent six months conducting fieldwork in Namibia. Uniquely for a foreigner and non-delegate, she was permitted to observe some of the Congress.

From December 6 to 11, 1991, SWAPO held its first National Congress as independent Namibia's first ruling party. The SWAPO Congress was the first to be held on Namibian soil in thirty years, and in many respects was the first genuine congress in the movement's history.

The Congress was billed by the organizing committee as marking the "transformation from liberation movement to mass political party," and the launching of the second phase of the struggle – the struggle for economic liberation. The media predicted clashes and power struggles between "hardliners" and "moderates" in the SWAPO government, between government and party hierarchies, and between leaders of the erstwhile "internal" and "exile" wings of the movement. The 1,000 delegates, elected from 13 regions, came hoping for solutions to immediate "bread and butter" concerns, while Moses Garoeb, party chief and Congress coordinator, promised that "the good, the bad, and the ugly" in SWAPO's history would be revealed during the course of the Congress. If, not surprisingly, none of these expectations was fully realised, the Congress nevertheless marked a watershed in the history of the movement which led Namibia to liberation, and will preside over its first years as an independent nation. What follows are a few observations – mostly impressionistic – about the Congress and what it means. Perhaps most importantly, the Congress ushered in

a new era for SWAPO – an era in which, one hopes, a more assertive "rank and file" membership will have an increasingly influential role in determining party structures, and in shaping party policy.

The opening ceremonies, moved indoors at the last moment owing to torrential rain, were attended by the entire diplomatic community – old friends and new – but the event belonged to the old friends. While the President, Prime Minister, SWAPO Secretary-General, and SWAPO Chief-Coordinator sat resplendent in outfits of blue, green and red in front of a giant banner which read "FIRST SWAPO CONGRESS IN INDEPENDENT NAMIBIA: FROM NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT TO POLITICAL PARTY. SOLIDARITY, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE" (with the word "MASS" squeezed in as an afterthought before "POLITICAL PARTY"), tributes were made to North Korea, China, Cuba, and the Frontline States, whose delegates responded with messages of solidarity – often shouting to be heard over the rain pounding on the tin roof – in what the Namibian described as a "revolutionary aura."

The most enthusiastic applause, however, was reserved for a fragile looking Oliver Tambo, who, as keynote speaker expressed

boundless joy and a sense of deep satisfaction because ... Namibia is our home and the people of this beautiful country are our own blood. Our history, our struggle, our destiny, and yours are fused

But if the new friends were not much in evidence during the opening ceremonies, the Congress could not have taken place without them. How far SWAPO's image has changed since its days as a "communist terrorist organization" was perhaps most eloquently expressed in the list of those who donated funds

for the occasion – which included the names of a number of large corporate sponsors.

The content of the Congress is perhaps best summarized in three parts – substantial, procedural, and sociological. With respect to substance, we'll take first things first: the party will retain the name SWAPO. The proposal to change SWAPO to NAPO (the Namibian People's Organization) was, not surprisingly, a non-starter. As a Youth League submission observed

the name SWAPO must not change because it is our identity and our pride. The people of Namibia suffered in the name of SWAPO and it was SWAPO which brought freedom in this country.

The Congress did decide, however, that the full name – the South West African People's Organization – is archaic and irrelevant, and that henceforth the Party will be known by acronym only, as in "SWAPO of Namibia." The Congress agreed, furthermore, to adopt Foreign Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab's suggestion that the five letters in SWAPO connote Sacrifice, Work, Advancement, Peace and Opportunities, with the single amendment that Solidarity replace Sacrifice.

The sixty-page Report of the Central Committee, covering the events of three decades of struggle, and read by the President, contained no surprises. Rather than "the good, the bad and the ugly" promised by Comrade Garoeb, it dutifully summarized what one expects will soon be entrenched as the official history of SWAPO. Once again old friends are saluted. The Frontline States, the OAU, Cuba, the USSR, the former GDR and other former East European socialist states are thanked for providing "all-round disinterested support in our cause during the dark days of

struggle," while, of the Western hemisphere, the Nordic countries, Italy and Holland are singled out for their "invaluable solidarity support and humanitarian assistance."

The report reiterates SWAPO's explanation of the tragedy of 1 April 1989, (the border crossing by SWAPO militants and their subsequent massacre by the South Africans) and condemns the dirty tricks devised by the opposition during the election campaign and the "crude propaganda" of opposition parties, especially with respect to the detainees issue, which together deprived SWAPO of a deserved two-thirds majority. The report also notes that a master list of 11,000 Namibians who died in the struggle, including the names of former detainees, had been compiled by the Department of Defense, and would soon be made available to SWAPO branch offices and Namibian churches.

If the stance and rhetoric of the "Report of the Central Committee" reflect the exigencies of fighting a liberation war with ostensibly revolutionary objectives, both the new Political Programme and Party Constitution are forward-looking documents, reflecting the priorities of a governing party elected on a platform perhaps best characterized as social-democratic. The first half of the Political Programme comprises an overview of the struggle, for the benefit of the young, in which there is no mention of socialism. In the second half, the four central present and future tasks of the party are outlined: a) the institutionalization of democratic political processes in Namibian society through the political education of the people; b) defining the role of the state in the country's socio-economic development ("despite the broad consensus in the country to allow the private sector to play an important and unimpeded role in the economy, the people still expect the state to play a role ... especially with respect to the building of schools, hos-

pital and roads, the provision of employment and establishing credit for Namibian entrepreneurs and developing favourable market conditions for them abroad"); c) achieving social justice through progressive policies designed to bring about equality of opportunity and a balanced and fair allocation of resources; and d) the building and welding together of a nation by uniting the country around a common consensus of values, goals and objectives through mass-based organization. The document concludes as follows:

The SWAPO political programme spells out the line for the Party to follow in order to play a leading role toward the building of a society that is materially and spiritually strong and productive, and whose people are secure from the anxiety of basic socio-economic needs. The implementation of the Programme will ensure that SWAPO fulfils its present and future tasks as a vital agent of development and a guarantor of democracy in our country.

The Constitution is primarily a procedural document. SWAPO's objectives have been changed to "reflect independence and SWAPO's party status in a multi-party democracy," and are "founded on the principles of democracy, solidarity, freedom, social justice and progress." The party "exists to arouse and mobilize Namibians for meaningful political participation and to translate their desires into policy," and the goal of political activity is to "improve the quality of life of the people, especially the colonially disadvantaged majority." Otherwise there are few changes to the constitution. There have been some amendments to the section on national organs, which now stipulates that affiliate organizations will no longer be named (this in light of the Namibian National Student Organization's (NANSO's) recent disaffiliation from SWAPO). The Central Committee has been increased from fifty to seventy persons, and the politburo to twenty-

one. The duties of Chairperson and Vice-President have been combined in the person of the Vice-President, while the duties of Administrator-General and Secretary-General have been combined in the person of Secretary-General. SWAPO's emblem remains a young man with a raised fist; the party motto is Solidarity, Freedom, Justice, and the anthem remains "Alert Namibia," sung to the tune of "Nkosi Sikelela," but has been converted from the present and future tenses to the past tense.

Following the adoption of the Political Programme and Constitution, the Congress heard from twelve sub-committees appointed to offer recommendations regarding: education and culture, defense and security, land, the national economy, health and social services, local government, housing, labour relations, transport and communication, legal and judicial affairs, youth and sport, and the mass media. Many of the reports were accompanied by reports produced by the relevant ministries, and each was followed by a general - and often animated - discussion.

The delegates' main concerns were clearly apparent from the time devoted to each of the reports. More esoteric subjects such as foreign relations, transport, and information policy were dealt with relatively quickly. The topics of education, national defense, crime, and the judicial system, by contrast, were each subjected to intense - and extensive - discussion. The debate on education alone lasted nine hours, and the debate on defense and security even longer, with participants advocating a tough line on both. Delegates condemned corruption in the school system, alcohol abuse by teachers and students, the sexual abuse of students by teachers, and absenteeism by both. A full-scale "war on crime" was called for, and substantial increases in both the National Defense Force and police were recommended.

Delegates' many concerns regarding the overburdened legal sys-

tem focused on four issues - inefficiency in the courts, a perceived leniency with respect to serious crimes, the relationship between customary law and common law, and the need for affirmative action in the judicial system.

The government's policy of national reconciliation also came under fire from delegates, who perceived it as being deliberately misconstrued by whites as protecting an unjust status quo. Reconciliation could not work - was too high a price to pay for stability - if it continued to be seen to benefit the "haves" at the expense of the "have nots," they noted.

The resolutions emanating from

the discussions in each of the twelve areas were summarized in the closing remarks, again delivered by the President, who observed that the Congress had been a "practical demonstration of democracy in action," which

builds on the firm foundations of a political culture which we want to nurture, develop and consolidate in our society. The seeds of this political culture were sown during the work of the historic Constituent Assembly which produced the much acclaimed model, democratic constitution of the independent Republic of Namibia. We continued with that same tradition during the Land Re-

form Conference, and this Congress (is) yet another milestone in the consolidation of that democratic culture.

(SAR readers will note with interest, as I did, President Nujoma's dating of the emergence of a democratic culture in Namibia from the convening of the Constituent Assembly in 1989).

In his closing remarks the President briefly summarized the debates on economic and foreign policy in a way which perhaps reflects more the perceptions of the party leadership than those of the rank in file, but reveals much about SWAPO's new development philosophy:



Congress identified pragmatic economic management, a viable democracy, the policy of national reconciliation, the creation of a competitively attractive and domestic investment environment, a rationalized, professional and efficient public service, and a good infrastructure, as essential ingredients for harnessing the potential wealth offered by our natural resources, especially mineral and marine resources. But above all else, maintenance of peace and security is uppermost and to this end the Party and Government remain absolutely committed.

And with respect to external relations:

The policies of SWAPO in this regard have always been aimed at securing friends who sympathize with and support our objectives of democracy and social justice ... The central approach in SWAPO's foreign policy in post-independent Namibia is to promote economic democracy. This means attracting investment, diversifying trade opportunities and promoting joint-ventures both with foreign governments and companies as well as with the local private sector.

The speech concludes with SWAPO's new call to arms: SWAPO - United! SWAPO - Victorious! Now - Hard work!

As the first of its kind inside Namibia, it is not surprising that the Congress was plagued by procedural glitches. For the most part both organizers and delegates accepted these with the good humour and patience characteristic of Namibians. After several consecutive twenty-hour days, however, delegates began to question some of the more glaring problems with the organization of the Congress. Their concerns stemmed primarily from the lack of consultation of the rank and file in the preparation of the Congress agenda and documents (these were only presented to delegates upon their arrival), and a perceived lack of democratic procedure at times in the

proceedings. Both flaws were perhaps most apparent when it came time to hold elections for the new SWAPO Central Committee.

In the first place, the election procedures were not only unwieldy but exclusionary - making it very difficult for all but the incumbents to fulfil the necessary conditions. In the first popular revolt of the Congress the delegates insisted that the provisions be re-drafted, and then again, before they finally allowed them to pass. Even so, the final version was confusing, and clearly weighted in favour of former Central Committee members. In the end, the newly-expanded Central Committee was remarkable mostly for its striking resemblance to the old. As expected, Sam Nujoma was once again acclaimed to the position of Party President. Hendrik Witbooi was re-elected Vice-President, and Moses Garoeb defeated Andimba Toivo ya Toivo for the revamped post of Secretary-General. Three seats are reserved, *ex officio* for the elected heads of the SWAPO Elders' Council, the SWAPO Women's Council and the SWAPO Youth League, and an additional six for presidential appointments. Of the remaining 58 positions - elected by Congress delegates from a list of 100 names by secret ballot - only 11 (by my count) were not current members of Cabinet, former Central Committee members, or both. There are seven women in total (three of them members of Cabinet). A few of the old guard were snubbed, and a little new blood injected. But if the Central Committee remains, on the surface, largely unchanged, the Party Congress will never be the same.

From a sociological perspective, the most fascinating aspect of the Congress was the growing assertiveness of the rank and file delegates. At the beginning of the Congress, one of the delegates - himself South African born and raised - privately expressed his frustration at the seemingly quiescent na-

ture of Namibian political culture. South Africans, he said, would never permit a proposed agenda to pass without debate, would never allow background documents to be distributed at the last minute, would never demonstrate such reluctance to challenge, question or criticise their leaders. Initially the delegates did appear to be surprisingly uncritical - but as the Congress progressed, a dramatic transformation began to take place. The shyness was shed, and participants - the women in particular - became more outspoken about the issues that directly affected their lives. Time limits to debates on such issues as education were ignored. Proposed election procedures were rejected not once, but twice, and the Election Committee sent back to re-draft them. The delegates' newly-discovered voices meant that discussion often went on long into the night, and that the Congress itself went almost two days overtime - but in the end the exhausted delegates seemed satisfied. An observation by one of the younger, more radical members of the leadership (quietly delighted at the change that had taken place), sticks in my mind:

The Congress was an important de-mythologizing experience. It wasn't always democratic - not so much intentionally, it's just what the leadership is used to - but that won't happen again. The delegates could see what was happening. They're inexperienced, but they're not stupid. Next time they will decide more things for themselves.

On the last day of the Congress I was sitting on the stoop of the International Hall with a number of weary delegates, all women, while the necessary but tedious process of translating the President's closing remarks into three other languages droned on in the background. One woman finally spoke. "They got away with some things this time maybe, but next time it's going to be different." She paused, then smiled. "Maybe I will run for President."

Mozambique Unravels?

The Retreat to Tradition

BY OTTO ROESCH

Otto Roesch is a member of the SAR editorial working group and teaches in the Anthropology Department at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. He recently returned from a research trip to central Mozambique and filed this report.

In the context of the ongoing debates about the nature of the war in Mozambique, and especially about the organizational character of Renamo and the role of government policies in precipitating the current conflict, the central Mozambican provinces of Manica and Sofala are of particular importance. It was in central Mozambique that Renamo's war against the Mozambican government first began and it is in central Mozambique that Renamo has always had its principal military bases. It is also from this region that the bulk of Renamo's military leadership, past and present, has come.

In an attempt to document something of the war experience of this part of the country, I spent two months earlier this year conducting field work in various parts of Manica and Sofala provinces. My Mozambican colleagues and I conducted about 200 interviews with refugees from Renamo-controlled areas, former Renamo combatants, ordinary peasants, militia and government officials. The picture of the war that has begun to emerge from this research points to a significantly different war dynamic than that found in southern Mozambique last year [see my article in SAR, December 1990] and from that described by French anthropologist Christian Geffray for the northern province of Nampula [see Bridgit O'Laughlin's article in the January 1992 issue of SAR].

In common with other areas of the country, however, the situation in central Mozambique serves to confirm the degree to which the war and the country's deepening economic crisis have virtually eliminated progressive politics from popular political discourse in the countryside.

Origins of the war in central Mozambique

Renamo's war against the Mozambican government had its beginnings in the Mt. Vumba area of Manica Province, close to the Zimbabwean (then Rhodesian) border, soon after Mozambique's independence in 1975. The first president and founder of Renamo, Andrea Matsangaissa, was a native of this area. An officer in the Mozambican armed forces at the time of independence, Matsangaissa was jailed for stealing state property, but succeeded in escaping from prison and fleeing to Rhodesia. From there he returned to the Mt. Vumba area with the backing of Ian Smith's white minority regime to launch Renamo's campaign of destabilization against the newly-independent Mozambican government. In 1976 he organized the first terrorist attack of the war. Matsangaissa and his followers attacked a bus, killing 16 civilians.

Mozambicans were caught up in a pervasive nationalist euphoria immediately after independence and, in the face of escalating Rhodesian attacks against Mozambique, most peasants in Matsangaissa's home area, as elsewhere in central Mozambique, showed little sympathy for Renamo or its vague ideological condemnations of Frelimo. Despite mounting peasant concern with certain aspects of Frelimo's ru-

ral development policies, support for Frelimo throughout central Mozambique continued to be widespread.

After 1977, however, the central Mozambican peasantry's attitude towards both Frelimo and Renamo began to change. As Frelimo began putting increasing pressure on peasants to abandon their traditionally dispersed way of life and move into communal villages – partly out of a misplaced security concern with Renamo and direct Rhodesian military attacks – peasant confidence in Frelimo declined rapidly. In most instances, a standard state model of what a communal village should be was mechanically imposed on the peasantry regardless of its suitability to local conditions. Resettlement into communal villages meant that fields, fruit trees and other resources were at great distances from their new homes creating a very real threat to household subsistence security. There were exceptions where local Frelimo officials allowed peasants to establish settlements that were sensitive to local ecological conditions and which offered peasant households continued easy access to their farms and many peasants did move into these communal villages. Unfortunately, these cases were the minority. Most peasants were simply unwilling to accept the Frelimo-imposed changes.

By the end of the 1970s, Frelimo was beginning to use coercive measures to enforce its villagization programme. In some areas people's homes were destroyed and whole families were forcibly resettled.

Under these circumstances, people became much more receptive to Renamo's propaganda against



Ernst Schade-Impact Visuals

Tete, Mozambique

communal villages. Furthermore, since local political authorities were responsible for implementing the unpopular communal village policy, grassroots democratic structures and Frelimo's whole experiment in 'people's power' suffered a serious loss of prestige and popular support. Local political leaders who sided with the state on the question of communal villages, lost the support and cooperation of the people, fueling a growing tide of popular political demobilization and local level administrative paralysis.

This growing popular disenchantment with Frelimo gave traditional chiefs an opportunity to reassert their authority over peasant communities. Traditional political leaders, whose authority (especially religious authority) was still considerable, provided a rallying point

for peasant grievances against the state. Gradually, and over increasingly larger areas of central Mozambique, many traditional leaders organized peasant opposition to the government and active support for Renamo.

Not all traditional political authorities became Renamo supporters. Many chiefs, some of whom had supported Frelimo during the anti-colonial struggle and were not about to make the same mistake twice, took an essentially neutral stand in the conflict. And even amongst chiefs who actively supported Renamo, their capacity to deliver popular support was sometimes constrained by the degree to which they had discredited themselves during the colonial period by collaboration with the colonial state.

By the same token, the response

of the peasantry to exhortations from their chiefs also varied according to their socio-economic interests. In general, the more educated and affluent sectors of the peasantry, which had historically opposed the constraints which the colonial state and its local chiefly collaborators had imposed upon its capacity to accumulate, preferred to side with the state against the chiefs. Ironically, in fact, the most economically advantaged sectors of rural society in central Mozambique, as elsewhere, have generally sided with 'socialist' Frelimo against 'capitalist' Renamo. Renamo's predatory and undisciplined actions have represented a far greater threat to the accumulated wealth of this stratum than Frelimo policies.

With or without active local (chiefly) support, communal vil-

lages quickly became, and have remained, a main target for Renamo attacks. In a first attack on a new community, residents have been simply ordered to abandon the village and return to their former homes, upon penalty of death. If that wasn't sufficient to convince most peasants, increasingly violent attacks, in which villagers are killed or kidnapped, property stolen and people's houses destroyed, have prompted most other residents to abandon communal villages. Those who continue to resist another move, have been forced to hide their possessions in the bush and to sleep out in the open at night for fear of further attacks.

In those areas that have passed under effective Renamo control, communal villages are completely abandoned and people have returned to a traditional dispersed settlement pattern in reconstituted communities under the control of traditional chiefs re-appointed by Renamo.

All those people who return to their former homes, be it in Frelimo- or Renamo-controlled areas, are regularly rounded up by government soldiers. They are taken back to communal villages in their home areas or, when this is not possible, to refugee camps in other parts of the province. In some cases, the people flee at the first opportunity. This is less an expression of support for Renamo than a wish to simply live in one's own home. A lot of the motivation for fleeing, in fact, is material rather than political, since life in Mozambican refugee camps can be rather grim.

Life & political administration in Renamo-controlled areas

In contrast to the situation I encountered in Gaza Province last year, where Renamo's presence is characterized by mobile bases, an economy of plunder with little or no production, and small administered territories and populations, the situation in large areas of Manica and



Ferhat Momade- AIM

Sofala provinces is characterized by fairly permanent bases, an economy of taxation (of the peasantry), and large administered territories and populations. In those areas of central Mozambique that it effectively controls, Renamo has re-instituted the old colonial system of indirect rule, reinstating traditional chiefs to administer the civilian population and collect taxes on behalf of Renamo. In this regard, the situation in Manica and Sofala resembles the situation described by Geffray in Namula.

By contrast, peasants living in areas outside of either government or Renamo control try to survive as best they can, seeking to avoid Renamo taxation and abuses on the one hand, and government round-ups of dispersed civilian populations on the other.

From a geographic point of view, Renamo's most stable taxation area - i.e. the part of central Mozambique most solidly under Renamo control - appears to be the Ndauspeaking area between the Buzi and Save rivers at the southern end of Sofala and Manica provinces. With the exception of a few small towns still in government hands and linked to the outside world only by air, most of the rest of the territory is effectively controlled and administered by Renamo. According to Ndauspeaking refugees from this area, Re-

namo's administration is relatively benign, and it is perhaps in this area that Renamo enjoys its greatest measure of popular support. In the words of one Ndauspeaking refugee from Mossurize District, the Renamo fighters "are our sons." This support, however, must always be seen in relative terms, for recruitment of combatants here, as elsewhere in Mozambique, is still primarily by capture. And though peasants are happy that Renamo allows them to live on their ancestral lands in customary fashion, they remain resentful of Renamo taxation and other abuses.

In the northern areas of Manica and Sofala where people speak a variety of other Shona dialects, the situation is more confused. Renamo has controlled large areas of territory here for long periods of time - most notably Gorongosa, Renamo's headquarters in Mozambique - and refugees relate that its treatment of the civilian population has been much harsher here than in the Ndauspeaking areas to the south.

According to some refugees we interviewed, Renamo's treatment of civilians in most areas of central Mozambique has improved over the course of the past year or so. It stems from the fact, they say, that the prospects for a negotiated settlement and multi-party elections have become increasingly probable.

It may also be a reflection of the increasing effectiveness of various forms of peasant ideological resistance to Renamo abuses and to the war in general.

Peasant ideological resistance

As is now well known, the core of Renamo's motivating ideology is expressed in a religious idiom that is rooted in traditional African ancestor worship. Renamo is waging a 'war of the spirits' in which Frelimo is condemned for having turned its back on Mozambican religious traditions. Renamo is portrayed as being in an alliance with the ancestral spirits in a war to return Mozambique to its traditions and ancestral ways. When Renamo wishes to occupy or operate in a new area, it always seeks out the traditional land chiefs or their families, in order to consult with, and seek the support of, the chiefs' ancestral spirits, who are deemed the legitimate 'owners' of the land and without whose support success would be impossible.

This traditional religious discourse, which permeates all aspects of Renamo's activities inside Mozambique, initially found considerable resonance in the consciousness of the rural population. As the war dragged on, however, and as the undisciplined, brutal and politically visionless character of Renamo became increasingly evident, the appeal of this traditionalist discourse began to carry increasingly less weight. In an attempt to defend itself from Renamo, Mozambican peasants throughout the country have begun to make increasing use of this same traditionalist discourse. The peasantry of many areas of central Mozambique - including many chiefs who initially supported Renamo - are now communicating with their ancestral spirits to let them know how tired they are of the war and how badly they are being treated by Renamo. The consequence of this, of course, is that the ancestral spirits are withdrawing their support from Renamo, thereby

depriving Renamo of military success, while also undermining the central plank of Renamo's popular mobilizational ideology.

This form of resistance, though more widespread in non-Ndau areas, is to be found in all areas of central Mozambique. It has been perhaps in an attempt to forestall any further peasant alienation, that Renamo has sought to improve its treatment of the rural population.

Peasant ideological resistance also takes a variety of other forms. One of the most effective forms is spirit possession. Increasing numbers of peasants are now being possessed by a particularly dangerous, powerful and vengeful spirit, much feared by Renamo fighters and the peasant population in general. This type of spirit possession has increased dramatically in Renamo-controlled areas over the past few years (especially at Renamo's headquarters in Gorongosa), and seems to occur with particular frequency amongst boys and young men about to be inducted into military service by Renamo, amongst girls and young women about to be abducted from their families by Renamo fighters, amongst ordinary peasants who are about to be despoiled of their belongings by Renamo, etc. In short, amongst many of those who are Renamo victims. The mere appearance of these spirits in the bodies of Renamo's intended victims is enough to put Renamo fighters to flight.

These forms of peasant ideological resistance to Renamo appear to be part of a wider resurgence of religious traditionalism in Mozambican society. It's the Mozambican peasantry's attempt to reconstitute a new system of meaning and social order out of the war-shattered wreckage of Frelimo's post-independence experiment and the colonial-cum-traditional society which Frelimo sought to transform.

A central feature of this resurgent traditionalism is to blame Mozambique's acute material crisis and indeed the war itself on the fail-

ure of local communities to follow traditional religious practices which in the past were believed to bring the rains, guarantee the fertility of the land, ensure the well-being of the community, etc. Frelimo's anti-traditionalist policies are deemed to have angered the ancestral spirits and led them to withdraw their support and protection from the living, thus bringing about the current hardship and suffering. In most cases, in fact, this ideological discourse incorporates a call for a return to some form of chiefly political and religious leadership at the local level. Though this is by no means universally or unconditionally accepted in the rural areas - finding its most organized opposition in the small but influential entrepreneurial stratum which, by and large, remains committed to representational forms of local government - it undoubtedly finds considerable resonance in the consciousness of much of the rural population.

How much the war and the country's deepening economic crisis have succeeded in excising popular democratic concerns from political discourse in Mozambique can be found in the fact that the state itself is now seriously considering a return to some form of chiefly rule. A return to chiefly authority, in which rehabilitated traditional chiefs are mandated to govern over rural populations and to collect taxes on behalf of the government, is an expedient way of re-asserting state authority and increasing state revenues in the rural areas. Unfortunately, such a development must also be seen as part of the process of recolonization in Mozambique. In much the same way as progressive politics has largely disappeared from national-level political praxis since the government's adoption of an IMF-approved structural adjustment programme in 1987, so too a proposed return to a revitalized form of indirect rule marks the formal demise of grassroots participatory democracy at the level of local government.

The New Terms of Solidarity: A Swedish Perspective

BY KENNETH HERMELE

Kenneth Hermele has been part of the Swedish solidarity movement, as journalist and cooperante in Mozambique from 1983 to 1986, and lecturer since the early 70s. Today he is a part-time researcher at the Working Group for the Study of Development Strategies (AKUT) at Sweden's Uppsala University. He is studying social and economic effects of structural adjustment in Africa and Latin America.

Everything is changing but the outlook of the solidarity movement appears oddly static. When activists in Sweden ask serious questions about "ways and means," we have to face the fact that the world today is a different one from what it was only a few years back. Despite this, most people conclude that we need to increase our efforts, but not necessarily do anything different. In other words, more of the same.

This conclusion hardly meets the challenges of today for two reasons. Firstly, the "ways and means" of the solidarity movement have already changed in day-to-day practice. We embrace a very different set of objectives and activities than we did when the movement first started. Secondly, if you look at the roots of the solidarity movement in Sweden, it's clear that today's situation requires something new.

Sweden of the 1960s and 1970s had a solidarity movement which was one of the strongest in the West. What made this solidarity movement strong? Why did people dedicate so much effort to support anti-imperialist struggles overseas? And how can we carry forward that heritage today?

Consider one of the dominating slogans of the 1970s: "one enemy - one struggle." The anti-imperialist struggles were a common front against a common enemy, imperialism. Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau, as well as Chile after the coup of 1973, were all part of that same struggle.

But equally central, at least to my understanding, was that we considered ourselves to be part and parcel of a world wide struggle against imperialism. And vice-versa: the struggles in distant countries would contribute to our efforts to overthrow capitalism at home. In fact, to many of the pioneers of the solidarity movement of the mid-1960s, the foremost challenge to the imperialist world order came from the periphery, especially from Vietnam. Our best bet - if we wanted to contribute to the smashing of imperialism world wide - was to support the third world struggle, rather than concentrate on our own home front.

Many also felt that we could learn from the new societies that were being built in the liberated areas. We were impressed that - literally in the face of enemy bombings and napalm - new social relationships were being constructed. People's power promised to be more democratic than the formal democracy which we enjoyed at home.

What we perhaps did not realize at the outset was that the strength of the anti-imperialist movement grew, to a considerable extent, out of that of the liberation movements: we fed on them, and with the force that we thus gained, we could develop our support for our common struggle.

The three phases of the anti-imperialist struggle

During a first phase of the anti-imperialist struggle, from about 1965 to 1975, victory for anti-imperialist forces seemed to be inevitable. This phase was crowned by the military victories in Vietnam and Africa. It also saw the formulation of a strong third world position *vis-à-vis* the dominating imperialist order. Beginning with the OPEC price hike of 1973, the third world, propelled by the non-aligned movement, called for a new international economic order in the United Nations (1974, 1975), codes of conduct from transnational firms, a new international currency not dependent upon the U.S. dollar, democratization of the World Bank. Utopian and naive as this sounds today, during this phase, the imperialist world order was being challenged in a way which the world had not seen since the integration of Eastern Europe with the Soviet Union and the Chinese revolution.

The second phase ran from 1975 to about 1980, and brought some important victories - especially Zimbabwe and Nicaragua - but also some worrying defeats. The promising development strategies of the newly-liberated countries of the mid-1970s all ran up against enormous difficulties. Some of these were no doubt created by a hostile imperialist camp (especially the wars of destabilization), which tried to regain what it had lost in the wars of liberation. But the defeats were also a result of the policies of the victorious liberation movements themselves, especially when broadly-based political alliances which had carried the liberation struggles to victory, were broken.

The third phase, which is still with us today, began in the early 1980s. It is characterized by a few victories, most notably in southern Angola, where the Cuban-Angolan victory over South Africa opened the way to the independence of Namibia and also hastened the turn of events in South Africa itself. But more importantly, it is a phase of defeat, symbolized by the growing power of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as executors of a coordinated debt strategy benefiting the creditor countries. This is what is commonly known as the debt crisis phase.

The challenge to the solidarity movement

By the end of the 1980s it was clear that the imperialist powers had managed to recuperate what they had lost. The brief challenge to the imperialist order of the mid-1970s was answered by an offensive which managed to reintegrate not only the few rebelling regimes, but also to subordinate most of the third world. In this counter-offensive, military destabilization combined with economic destabilization in the form of structural adjustment to bring about the desired outcome: a world order tailored to the needs of the dominating capitalist powers.

This historic defeat can also be seen from another angle. The third world lost the political initiative it had held from 1973. It was lost in the debt crisis and the neo-colonial policies which forced the indebted countries to concentrate on exporting raw materials at ever-deteriorating terms of trade.

This does not mean that the strategists of the new world order want to "de-link" the poor world from the rich. They know that this is impossible. As a U.S. state department official has said: the U.S. cares about Africa for three reasons - AIDS, environmental degradation, and refugees. In other words: when the poor

ity of their own peoples, in the process losing most of the legitimacy they earned during the long years of armed struggle. From examples admired by a whole world, they have now become the unhappy champions of a vicious and savage form of unproductive and speculative capitalism. We may argue about why and how this sad state of affairs

has been brought about - e.g. if internal policy mistakes or external destabilization should carry most of the blame - but we ought to be able to agree on the facts of the matter.

In these countries, protests, strikes, and clashes are now everyday occurrences. These manifestations of popular discontent are directed against those political parties with which we once shared objectives and aspirations.

And the solidarity movement itself, what has become of it? It began as a political force operating on the home front of the common struggle. Gradually, solidarity activists became 'gap-fillers' in those third

world countries we supported. We lent a hand to the weak state apparatus, assisting the newly-liberated countries to carry out policies that they themselves had designed and which we supported. But over the years, the movements' activities took on a more permanent feature. As our allies - the state-building liberation movements - were losing strength and changing course, we stepped in to replace them with our own set-ups, projects and programmes, replete with a conditionality of our own.



Gardens Media Group, Community Arts Project (CAP), Cape Town

people threaten vital interests of the imperialist centre, they become important to reckon with.

The dramatic turn-about of the 1980s has also left its imprint on the countries with which the solidarity movement has been closely allied for more than twenty-five years. From being the main threat to the imperialist world order, our allies have become subordinates of the World Bank and the IMF. From building broad political alliances, they have moved to marginalizing the major-

This whole shift in activity was financed by aid. In Sweden, the solidarity movement today receives about 90 per cent of its funding from SIDA, the Swedish International Development Agency. This dependency, coupled with wishful thinking and a reluctance to see the writing on the wall, has helped weaken the political stand of the solidarity movement. In Sweden, the solidarity movement has not been in the forefront criticizing the consequences of the debt strategy of the creditor countries. Religious groups have been much more active than we, petitioning the government, publishing critiques, organizing campaigns. Neither has the solidarity movement been seriously questioning the ecological consequences of aid in general, nor of large-scale mechanized agriculture or of fossil fuel-based industrialization, especially not in the countries we once so strongly supported. Here, Friends of the Earth and other pioneers have shown the way.

Likewise, democracy and other human rights issues have been not our focus, but that of such groups as Amnesty International.

Today, the solidarity movement – just like everybody else – professes democracy and support for a sustainable development strategy. But our credibility is low, our knowledge superficial, and our commitment wavering. We are, in fact, late-comers to these areas of the struggle, since we for so many years have been preoccupied with supporting and strengthening our political allies, the liberation movements that have become the agents of state-led modernization and development.

Choosing a future

Today, the daily work of the solidarity movement is very like that of an aid organization, with all its limitations and draw-backs. The financial dependency strengthens this tendency, as aid money increasingly will be made available only if the solidarity movements play along with the wishes of SIDA. For a decade

now, SIDA has encouraged Swedish non-governmental organizations to be intermediaries in the aid business. Thus, as executors of the official aid policy, the solidarity movement may be blessed with large sums of money. But choosing this option also means that our political profile must be lowered (or kept low) in order not to bite the hand that feeds us.

All this might have been acceptable, had an anti-imperialist stance no longer been warranted. But since the development projects of our former allies have been replaced by a new project of integration and subordination, formulated by the U.S. and backed by most countries of the West, there clearly is a need for a resurrection of an anti-imperialist perspective. But this time, some of the tenets of the earlier phase have to be revised.

Firstly, the challenge to the world order of imperialism no longer comes from the periphery of the system. If we in the belly of the beast could challenge the debt strategy, the imperialist free trade dogma, and the power of transnational capital, we would increase the scope for manoeuvre by third world countries. Conclusion: political work at home has a higher priority.

Secondly, in terms of global ecological consequences, we in the industrialized countries are the worst sinners. This holds for major problems such as the greenhouse effect, damage to the ozone layer, runaway fossil fuel consumption, etc. Similarly, it is the lifestyle of the West – with its emphasis on over-consumption and waste – which sets the model for the rest of the world. Here, they learn from us.

In this perspective, ecological insights should be applied where it is most needed, i.e. in the West. An average U.S. citizen consumes 50 kg of resources everyday, while a poor peasant of the third world has to make do with two kilograms. In other ways, 40 million Westerners

weigh ecologically as much as a billion in the third world. Conclusion: ecological politics must begin at home. This also holds true if we want to have any credibility in arguing for an ecologically sound development strategy in the third world.

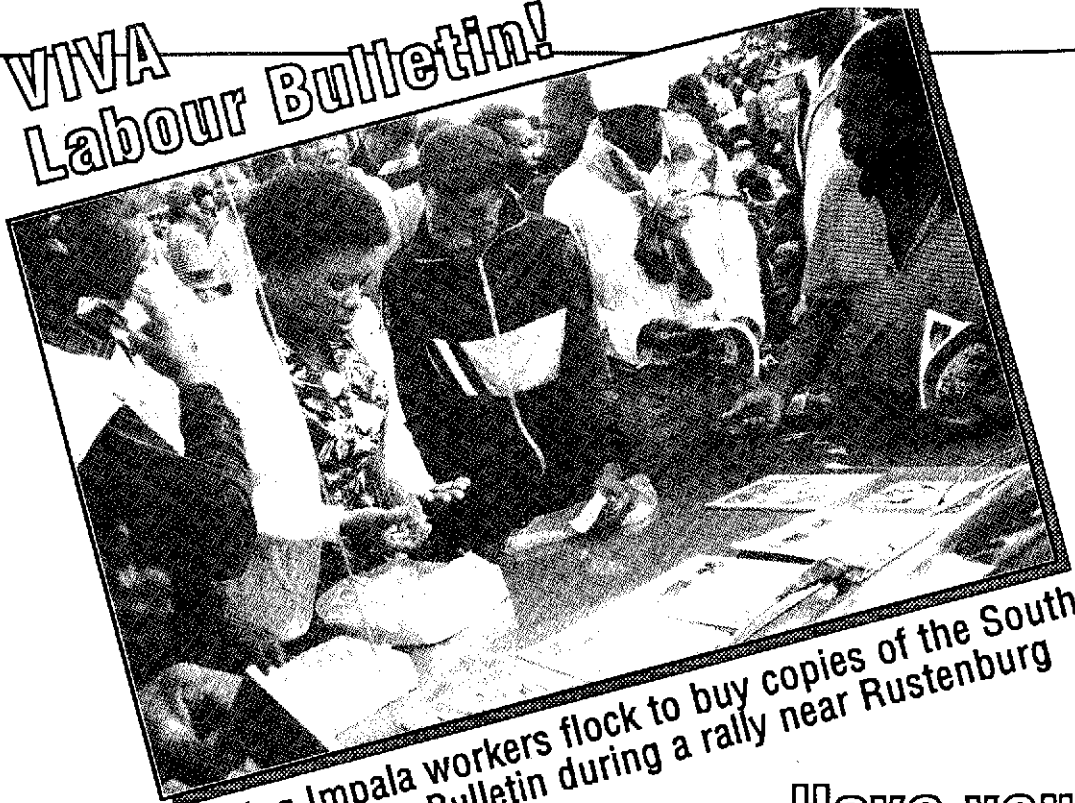
Thirdly, in the third world we should ally ourselves with those forces fighting against the exploitation of imperialism, against the regimes which collude with the IMF and the World Bank in the pursuit of a devastating debt strategy. Such groups may be found in trade unions, peasant organizations, women's groups, professional organizations, cooperatives, etc. Conclusion: our new allies may be the enemies of our old allies.

Fourthly, the possibility of carrying out such a strategy hinges to an important degree on our financial and political independence. Conclusion: we must rely henceforward on our own limited resources. A strategy of "politics first" requires a strength that grows out of autonomy.

Two objections to this line present themselves readily. Firstly, our third world allies never were as homogenous as implied above. Hence, the struggle rages also within parties and state apparatuses, and the solidarity movement should not abstain from participating in that struggle. I believe that this is true, but also that our best contribution would be to support such groups and forces which formulate a radical position outside established centres of power.

Secondly, it may be said that the line here suggests the solidarity movement should desert our allies when they most need our support. But no: I am arguing that anti-imperialists have to find real allies, at home as well as abroad. And although yesterday's allies may have become today's foes, people still struggle, organize and demand our solidarity. It is with these allies the future, our common future, lies.

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