

Southern Africa REPORT

Vol. 10 No. 4

May 1995

Regional Roundup:

DEBATE
What's Left of
the Left in South Africa

Zimbabwe

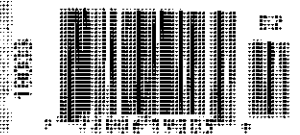
Mozambique

Lesotho

Swaziland

Namibia

Elections are not
Enough

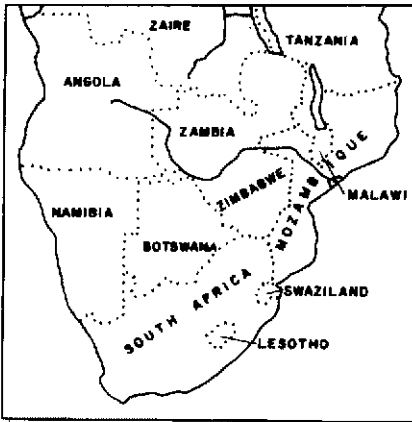


price \$4.50

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Southern Africa REPORT

is produced 4 times a year by a volunteer collective of TCLSAC, the Toronto Committee for Links between Southern Africa & Canada

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Toronto, M4X 1P9

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Submissions, suggestions and help in production are welcome and invited.

ISSN 0820-5582

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Subscriptions

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

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Elections Are Not Enough



No region of the world is as vulnerable to the vagaries of "the new world disorder" as Africa. Some writers, like Robert Kaplan in a widely-cited article in the *Atlantic Monthly* a few years ago, have even seen contemporary Africa as a metaphor for "the coming anarchy" that he feels is likely to characterize much of the world in the decades ahead.

His presentation is a Disney World of disaster, of course, painted in broad primary colours that are designed to shock, to appal... and to sell magazines. Nor does he show any inclination to highlight the broader economic trends - of "globalization," structural adjustment and "recolonization" - that so mercilessly frame the situation he describes. Nonetheless, as one looks across the continent, from Somalia to Rwanda, from Kenya to Nigeria, there is just enough grim truth to his nightmare tale to give cause for alarm.

To some extent, those of us preoccupied with developments in southern Africa have been spared the necessity to confront such grim realities so directly. True, the facts we have had to face have been grisly enough in their own terms: war, destabilization, the displacement of populations and, increasingly, signs that the conditions of life for the vast mass of the

Photo: Reuters - C. J. O'Connell

population in the region are very far from having been altered for the better in terms of material well-being or personal security. And yet such facts have also been redeemed by a sense of high and heroic purpose, a sense of purpose that helped to qualify, in important ways, their negative import for us.

After all, southern Africa was the last redoubt of white minority rule on the continent and one that would not – it became evident – yield without a fight to democratic demands. The “thirty years war of southern African liberation” waged across the region between 1960 and 1990 thus defined an important historical moment: the triumphant culmination of anti-colonial nationalism in Africa, a dramatic step forward in the worldwide struggle against racism, even the promise of challenging the hegemony of global capitalism in a promising and progressive way.

We need not underestimate the great achievement of the peoples of southern Africa in overthrowing the white minority regimes – Portugal’s ultra-colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, the UDI regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia, the apartheid state in Namibia and South Africa – to acknowledge that the honeymoon is now over in the region. Revolutionary governments that once seemed to promise dramatic socio-economic transformations are mere shadows of their former selves, and even the ANC’s post-apartheid regime in South Africa begins to seem something of an anti-climax in light of the high hopes that were once invested in it. In short, southern Africa begins to look rather more like the rest of the continent than might have been predicted during the heady days of “liberation movements,” “people’s war” and “mass democratic struggle.”

The sober tone of recent numbers of *SAR* certainly reflects acknowl-

edgement of this reality, the present issue being no exception. Indeed here, as we survey the political landscape in a wide range of countries in the region beyond South Africa itself, the mood may seem particularly bleak. True, the emphasis of many of our articles is on recent electoral undertakings in the various countries surveyed. Isn’t the very fact that elections are occurring across the region an important advance in the light of the wide-spread pattern of authoritarian practices that have otherwise characterized both the region and the continent as a whole?


Unfortunately, given the broader political realities that tend to frame such electoral undertakings, it is difficult to answer “yes” with any confidence to this last question. Thus, in our present issue, Richard Saunders underscores the hollowing out of formally democratic institutions that Robert Mugabe and his colleagues continue to preside over in Zimbabwe, while a Maputo correspondent reflects on some of the deep-seated contradictions that now plague a post-elections Mozambique.

Larry Swatuk’s “tales of two kingdoms” (Lesotho and Swaziland)

– where electoral proceedings have been more or less swallowed up in the negative fall-out from other political realities in these countries – make equally sobering reading. And even Lauren Dobell’s rather more up-beat reading of the recent trip to the polls in Namibia suggests some of the crucial question-marks that continue to shadow the future of democracy and development in that country. In short, it is a long step from “merely” having elections to realizing any kind of genuine popular empowerment. It is also a step that the peoples of southern African countries are finding it difficult to make under the grim conditions that currently stalk them.

What price solidarity, then? There are, self-evidently, more than enough grounds for continuing solidarity with southern Africans (including those, discussed in Dan Connell’s article in this issue, who seek to sustain a meaningful left presence in South Africa itself) as they regroup to pursue a more meaningful “liberation.” However, one other article in the current issue suggests just how urgent it is that those of us in the North who are prepared to work towards grounding this kind of solidarity find ever more imaginative ways to do so.

In Canada (as our Ottawa bureau chief reports) the recent, business-oriented federal aid budget reveals the government to be even less committed than previously to facilitating the kind of grass-roots development that might actually serve to help ground genuine popular empowerment. Particularly wounded by government cut-backs have been Canadian NGOs who have been working directly with Southern counterparts towards such ends. And this from a Liberal party that, during its last campaign, promised to reverse the rightward thrust of Brian Mulroney’s policy package! Here too, it would seem, elections are not enough.



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A Hollow Shell: Democracy in Zimbabwe

BY RICHARD SAUNDERS

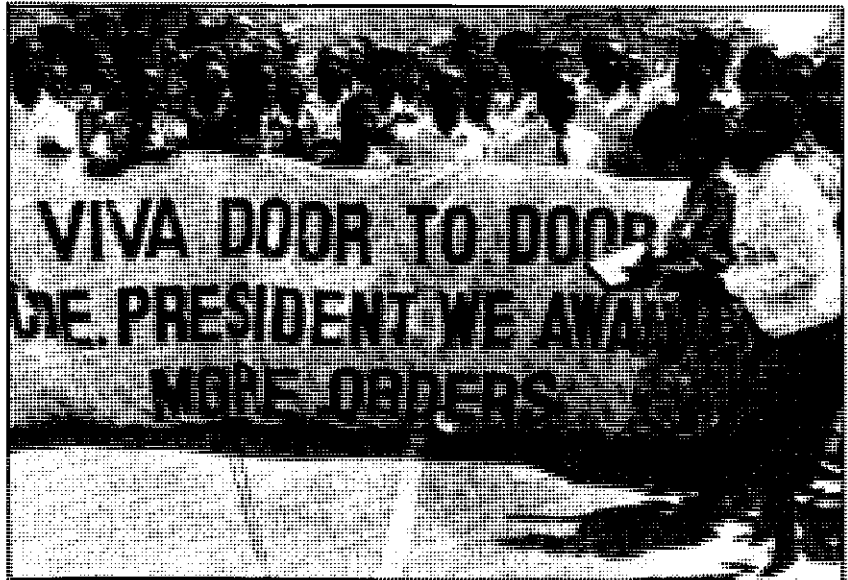
Richard Saunders is our man in Harare.

In many countries, the circumstances faced by Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his governing ZANU-PF in advance of April's general elections would have been cause for alarm, if not panic.

Unemployment has quadrupled since independence 15 years ago and is still rising, with at least 44% (and likely more) of the formal sector labour force of 2.2 million out of work. At the same time, the standard of living for those with jobs has slipped to a 25-year low, following five years of a World Bank-inspired economic reform programme, ESAP, which saw the removal of controls on markets and prices, significant devaluation of the dollar and large cuts in spending on social services. More recently, drought has returned to most of this agriculture-based country, and threatens to force some millions in the rural areas onto food relief – and deeper into poverty.

Add to these problems the fact that widespread corruption in government and the ruling party have been regular features of both the national media and every day street talk since the early 1990s, and one wonders: how is it that Robert Mugabe has just won his fourth consecutive set of elections – and in a walk at that, winning 118 of 120 elected parliamentary seats?

The explanation is to be found neither in the power of ZANU-PF's campaign, nor in the lure of the President's charisma, but rather in the grim model of multi-party democracy which Zimbabwe's ruling



SAPEM

party has moulded and refined since coming to power in 1980.

It is a model which has mixed western-style liberal democratic political constructs with ZANU-PF's increasingly partisan domination of state and civil society, producing a pro-forma democracy that evokes little popular enthusiasm and diminishing active participation from ordinary Zimbabweans. This gradual de-popularisation of the formal political process has seen the ruling party invite its opponents to make better use of democratic structures; while simultaneously threatening or harassing them, and using the state apparatus to undermine the institutions of democracy themselves.

This tactic of political control has proven highly effective in maintaining the ruling party's stranglehold on national politics. Under these circumstances the formation of alternative political parties with the capacity to seriously engage debate and organize disparate voices of

opinion in civil society – much less wage effective electoral campaigns – has been severely restricted. When something close to real opposition parties have emerged in the recent past – like Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement, which won two seats in 1990 – the ruling party hasn't hesitated to use instruments of state security, alongside party organs and agents, to intimidate, harass and otherwise undermine the groups involved.

The consequences for real democracy have been devastating. Though Zimbabwe has never been a one-party state, and government has officially invited challenges from opposition parties, it is clear from this year's elections that a substantial multi-party politics is no longer viable in Zimbabwe under present conditions. The two seats won by the opposition on April 8 and 9 went to Ndabaningi Sithole's ethnically-based ZANU-Ndonga party; and in only a handful of other constituen-

cies did the mixed-bag of opposition candidates come somewhat close.

Overall, ZANU-PF won 1.1 million votes (out of 1.5 million cast), against the combined opposition vote for parties and independent candidates of more than 200,000. But the better indicator of the parlous state of Zimbabwean democracy was ZANU-PF's unprecedented winning of 55 seats by acclamation. In reality, during these "national" elections less than 45% of Zimbabwe's 4.8 million eligible voters living in 65 contested constituencies were able to vote - and typically, in a choice between the ruling party nominee and one opposition party or independent candidate.

Even then, the outcome in those contested constituencies had little impact on the formation of the next government: under constitutional amendments introduced by ZANU-PF, the President has the right to appoint 20 MPs directly, as well as 10 chiefs representing traditional leaders. As a result, ZANU-PF quietly gained an absolute majority in Parliament the moment nominations closed in March.

It was these provisions, along with other legislated regulations and more subtle forms of leverage favouring ZANU-PF's chances in the electoral contest, which led some parties to boycott the elections - a move which undoubtedly contributed to many of ZANU-PF's wins by acclamation, and to lower voter turnouts for opposition candidates.

The boycott, headed by the tiny Democratic Party, Abel Muzorewa's United Parties and ZUM (the only boycotting party with seats in Parliament, having won two in 1990), was called at the eleventh hour in protest over the panoply of unfair advantages ZANU-PF amassed for itself, mostly when it was still (officially) in a one-party state frame of mind. They include a range of constitutional, legislative and regulatory devices; among them the widely-condemned Political Parties (Finance) Act, which provides for

ZW \$32 million in state funding annually to political parties with more than 15 seats in Parliament (ZANU-PF being the only party with more than two seats since 1990). But they also comprised ZANU-PF's long-standing control and use of various wings of the publicly owned press and broadcasting infrastructure; of government departments, equipment and labour power; and of the party's own and affiliated institutions in civil society, like the Women's and Youth Leagues.

All of these factors, the boycotting parties correctly noted, precluded the holding of free and fair elections in 1995.

Contesting parties, led by ZANU-Ndonga and Enoch Dumutshena's Forum Party of Zimbabwe, agreed that such rules, regulations and practices were unfair and should be abolished or revised; but also felt that voters should be offered a choice. This crack in solidarity around the (albeit haphazard) boycott, along with the relative calm and smoothness of the elections in constituencies where they did take place, allowed ZANU-PF and its media to proclaim the ballot "free and fair." But neither party nor its press engaged the substantive issues of the stay-away, concerning the lop-sided advantages enjoyed by ZANU-PF, and its cynical, ventriloquist's role in operating the machinery of the democratic process.

Neither were these issues coherently and effectively raised by the opposition candidates. Among the contesting parties, severe organisational and financial weaknesses pre-empted the mounting of full slates of candidates, let alone effective campaigns centred on a coherent set of issues. In many cases candidates were obliged to pay for their nomination deposits and campaign materials out-of-pocket, thus resembling more a set of independent candidates than members of a party with a manifesto and campaign platform. At the same time, the opposition parties showed little real capacity

to generate critiques of government and alternative policy recommendations, and deliver both to the national political stage for debate and consideration.

Where there were serious challenges to individual ZANU(PF) candidates the opposition appeal was based more on the grassroots popularity of the individual challengers. And it was such challenges that saw ruling party activists fall back on the very worst of past practices.

Supporters of Margaret Dongo, a vociferous and popular ZANU(PF) MP and ex-combatant from Harare South who this year stood as an independent after party leaders conspired to de-select her in a pre-election constituency primary, were attacked and harassed by their former colleagues in the local party district. T-shirts were torn off supporters' backs, and their houses were stoned. Dongo herself was assailed by President Mugabe and others as a quitter and unruly party member, and suspended from the party.

She responded by noting that she had "picked up the gun at the age of 15 to help put the President where he is today"; but that nonetheless, she would forgive Mugabe his harsh words, because she thinks of him in the same way as her "90 year-old grandmother, who is old and should be forgiven." In a country where such mockery of the President is unheard of, these sorts of challenges won Dongo admiration and support far beyond her constituency.

But in the end she was beaten by Vivian Mwashita, an operative of the CIO (Zimbabwe's secret police) with no previous political office, in the wake of allegations of cheating and intimidation made by the Dongo camp. "Having 5,190 ZANU-PF supporters casting their vote for an independent in a ZANU-PF stronghold is no joke," Dongo said. "They did a splendid job but as usual, it is difficult to overcome the ZANU-PF machinery."

The SWAPO Sweep

BY LAUREN DOBELL

Lauren Dobell is a doctoral candidate in politics at St. Antony's College. She recently returned from Namibia, where she has been studying post-independence development strategies.

On March 21 Namibians celebrated the fifth anniversary of the country's independence. Here we look briefly at how Namibia has fared over the last five years, the first post-independence general elections that recently returned Swapo to office with a resounding majority, and the challenges that should occupy the government's attention for the remainder of the millennium.

The first five years

On the eve of the fifth anniversary celebrations, the Minister of Health and Deputy Minister of Justice were reminiscing over a cup of tea in the parliamentary restaurant. "I remember that first day we sat as a Constituent Assembly. You could have cut the tension - especially between the DTA and Swapo - with a knife," recalled the latter. "And the amazing thing was that it was [then DTA leader] Dirk Mudge who found a way out. He said 'Look here, we are sitting with seven different draft constitutions on the table. If we argue from all of them we're never going to get anywhere. What I propose is that as Swapo is the majority party, we take its draft constitution as a starting point, and use the others as the basis for proposing amendments.'"

"And then," the Minister interjects, "Hage [Geingob], who was chairing, suggested that we deal with all the issues where there was substantial agreement first, and leave the controversial ones to the end."

"And we discovered that on 90% of the issues we were substantively in agreement," the other replies.



Lauren Dobell

SWAPO young pioneer

"And by the time we got to the controversial issues these were less controversial and difficult because all this time we had been learning about each other, learning to work together ..."

Indeed, five years later, the prevailing collegiality of the Namibian National Assembly is striking, as is the success of the government's policy of national reconciliation, at least among Namibia's political and

economic elites. Beyond the confines of this elite, however, progress since independence on national reconciliation, national reconstruction and nation-building has been mixed. On the positive side, Namibia has enjoyed five years of peace and political stability, loyal support from donors, and modest economic growth (variously calculated at between 2% and 3.5% per year), although this is much tempered by a booming population. Walvis Bay has been returned, and two major highways – the Trans Caprivi and Trans Kalahari – are well underway, which should help Namibia to diversify its trade patterns. And in December 1994, the South African government cancelled Namibia's colonial debt, bolstering the country's enviable position *vis-à-vis* the IMF, whose loans Namibia can afford to refuse.

On the other hand, although government and non-government efforts have made advances in the areas of health care, housing and education, the dramatic imbalances of wealth have not been effectively addressed. Foreign investors have been less forthcoming than anticipated. Unemployment is commonly estimated at 40%, while the continuing absence of a land reform policy, exacerbated by the 1992 drought and belated rains in 1995, has contributed to the steady flow of job-seekers from rural to urban areas, with the concomitant social stresses. Anxiety about the overall increase in crime is widespread. Finally, the government's sluggish response to corruption within its own ranks is cause for concern, as is evidence of extravagant spending by the executive, most notably in the purchase of a presidential (Falcon) jet during the 1992 drought, and a Lear jet (delivered immediately after the 1994 elections).

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the peace dividend, however, and despite the slow pace of reform in other areas, the majority of Namibians are willing to give Swapo another five years, at

least, in which to pursue what its leaders are calling the "second phase of the liberation struggle."

The 1994 elections

In the final days of Swapo's election campaign, incumbent President Sam Nujoma addressed party rallies with the call "72 for Swapo" – a reference to the total number of seats in the Namibian National Assembly. And on December 7 and 8 1994, in Namibia's first national and presidential elections since independence, Namibian voters gave Nujoma what he asked for, if not precisely what he meant. Its 72.72% of the votes cast secured for Swapo 53 of 72 seats in parliament. Whether or not the burden of governing in the absence of an effective opposition comes to weigh heavily upon the new Swapo government, the election results – and certain aspects of the process – did, to the minds of some observers, carry some potentially worrying implications for the entrenchment of a participatory democratic political culture in Namibia.

Eight parties contested the 1994 general elections, though only Swapo and the official opposition, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), fielded presidential candidates – incumbent Sam Nujoma and opposition leader Mishake Muyongo respectively – with Nujoma polling 76.33% of the total. Namibia's oldest, but now marginalized political party, SWANU, chose to run its own campaign, after a last-minute withdrawal from the newly-formed Democratic Coalition of Namibia (DCN), a centre-right merger with a high profile leadership. The United Democratic Front (UDF), whose four seats in the 1989 elections had made it the second largest of the opposition parties in parliament, chose not to join the alliance, for reasons its leaders now suggest were borne out in the DCN's acrimonious internal struggles during its brief and chaotic election campaign.

The three remaining parties contesting the elections were the Mon-

itor Action Group led by erstwhile African Christian National (ACN) MP Kosie Pretorius (the acronym in Afrikaans means "power"), the Rehoboth-based Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN), whose last-minute alliance with a newly-sprung women's party resulted in an uncomfortable fit between its stated policy and its election rhetoric, and the Worker's Revolutionary Party (WRP), whose outspoken representatives injected the only sparks into otherwise lacklustre campaigns by all parties.

As in 1989, party histories were once again more salient than party policies. Manifestos were both difficult to come by and difficult to distinguish from one another. With production funds at its disposal (state funding was denied to the opposition parties), and the accomplishments of five years in office to enumerate, Swapo's manifesto was glossy in appearance and comprehensive in its promises, displaying a consummate command of the language of governance in the 1990s.

The opposition parties' manifestos were pretty uninspired, lending poignant credence to the rueful observation by a local observer that the forthcoming general and presidential contests were, in effect, "elections without a choice." With neither the resources nor a policy record, however mixed, to allude to, most of the opposition parties opted for a law and order platform. The DCN distinguished itself only by a special plea for the importance of strong and independent interest groups; the DTA by a thinly-disguised nod to its ethnic constituencies in its recognition of "the interests of peoples," and a particularly hard line on the issue of crime. The UDF joined its competitors in calling for drastic steps to fight crime, in decrying government intervention in market forces and in lamenting the state of the education system. SWANU's claim to distinction rested in the costliness of



Lauren Dobeil

Prime Minister Hage Geingob & Mines & Energy Minister Andimba Toivo ya Toivo

its proposed programme, which envisaged, inter alia, free and universal education, health care and social security, and proper housing for all. MAG's manifesto explicitly declared the party's exceptional nature as "the only party endeavouring to have the word 'secular' removed from the constitution."

Slightly more original was the FCN's manifesto which catered to the strong separatist leanings of its Rehoboth-based constituency. Once again, the WRP manifesto was the only one that evinced any real spark. The manifesto addressed several sensitive subjects skirted by the other opposition parties, heaping scorn on the "law and order hysteria" which formed the basis of their election campaigns, and dismissing as "a farce" their performance in Parliament. The WRP polled less than 1% of the overall vote in this election, but can be credited with attempting to

campaign on issues in an election dominated by personalities.

Election days

Not altogether coincidentally, the Swapo government was the beneficiary of two political windfalls during the campaign period - the signing of a profit-sharing arrangement with Consolidated Diamond Mining (CDM) and the waiving of Namibia's N\$1 billion colonial debt by the South African government - the latter announced by "a jubilant Prime Minister Geingob" at a rally in Grootfontein the day before the elections.

Organized by a Directorate of Elections operating out of the Office of the Prime Minister, this was the first general election run by Namibians themselves and, as with the local and regional elections of 1992, demonstrated that a foreign presence was not required to ensure a peaceful vote.

A number of procedural problems were highlighted, however. Before the counting was complete, officials confirmed that in four northern constituencies the ballots cast had exceeded the number of voters registered. Although the officials concluded that the irregularities could be explained on the grounds of compounded inefficiencies and administrative error, the DTA, smarting especially at the loss of the traditional stronghold of Katima Mulilo, announced its intention to pursue allegations of fraud through a court case.

The court case notwithstanding, members of both parties joined independent observers in acknowledging that if fraud had taken place it was not sufficient to have significantly affected the overall results, which gave Swapo 53 seats (an increase of 12), the DTA 15 seats (a loss of 6), and the UDF 2 seats (a loss of 2).

The rest of the parties polled less than 1% of the votes apiece, although the quota system gave MAG and the DCN each one seat, returning parliamentary veterans Kosie Pretorius and Moses Katjuongua. The WRP, to the disappointment of its fans, failed to gain a seat, a condition party spokespersons cheerfully vowed to rectify next time.

Post mortem

Apart from the DTA allegations of malpractice, critical post mortems of the election have concentrated on five themes, all falling under the general rubric of "threats to democracy." The drop of approximately 200,000 votes overall from the numbers polled in the 1989 election caused some concern among observers, though less among the parties themselves. A 76% turnout, the victors were quick to point out, is still significantly higher than most

established democracies can boast of. Another concern is the continuing "ethnicity" of voting patterns in Namibia. Once again Swapo swept the North, polling upwards of 94% of the votes cast in all but four of the thirty-eight northern constituencies where Oshivambo-speaking Namibians are concentrated, while opposition parties in many cases failed to win a single vote. The DTA polled the majority of votes in the south and east of the country, and most of the Caprivi, splitting the Windhoek area constituencies with Swapo. The UDF once again drew its support from the Damara-speakers.

While ethnicity undoubtedly played a role in the elections, it is a factor that must be treated with some care, conflating, as it does, different experiences of colonial occupation, apartheid and war with eth-

nic identification. It should also be noted that a third of Swapo's votes came from non-Oshivambo speakers, and that its party list was itself drawn, as in 1989, from across the Namibian spectrum. As with signs of apathy, it will take another election to judge whether ethnic affiliation will continue to play a substantial role in Namibian politics.

The dramatic diminution of the parliamentary opposition - from 31 to 19 seats - is a third source of anxiety, most of all, naturally, to those dropped from the ranks. Certainly, among the other parties, there are those who recognize that opposition parties will not recoup their losses until they can divest themselves of their perceived associations with a colonial past. It's a transformation that may only be fully achieved with the emergence of a new generation of



President Sam Nujuma & Justice Minister N. Tjiriange

Lauren Dobell

political leaders. Nonetheless, the damage to the opposition's electoral performance wreaked by personality clashes and power struggles among opposition leaders is also widely acknowledged, and there are moves afoot to overcome some of the existing barriers to a more unified and effective opposition.

While seasoned parliament-watchers maintain that the quality of the opposition has not been much affected, the drop in numbers is closely related to a fourth concern – and the one uppermost in the minds of many political observers: that Swapo's two-thirds majority enables it to unilaterally amend the non-entrenched provisions in the Namibian Constitution. Rumours are rife that Swapo may seek to extend the term of the president, currently fixed at two five-year terms, while a successor is groomed. The president himself is coy, promising only that there will be a national referendum before the Constitution is amended in any way, but it is known that there is widespread opposition within Swapo's inner circles to such an amendment. Other amendments are considered unlikely, even those cynical about Swapo noting that the Constitution is too valuable in its present form to be much tampered with.

The least discussed but perhaps most worrying aspect of the election was the further weakening of already struggling structures within Namibian civil society, with the incorporation of civil leaders – three senior trade unionists, and prominent youth, community and women's representatives – into parliament. That the union leaders (Bernard Esau, John Shaetonhodi, and Walter Kemba, who now join former NUNW president Ben Ulenga in parliament) were apparently among the 32 Swapo candidates personally put forward for election by President Nujoma, in response to a strong lobby from their respective unions, is submitted as evidence that it is not a deliberate

Swapo strategy to coopt potential sources of dissidence. Critics, however, have argued that the fact that such incorporation is necessary in the minds of union leaders is further evidence that organized labour's ties to the government are too close.

A term of consolidation?

Namibians had 'finally' given Swapo the mandate to rule the way it wanted, President Nujoma told cheering supporters at Swakopmund on Saturday ... "You have given us the mandate and we won't let you down ... the capacity is there to deliver the goods at the end." Namibian 12/12/94

The new parliament was sworn in on March 20. Taking the oath of office himself the following day, President Sam Nujoma announced the launch of the "second phase of the liberation struggle," in which the enemies were poverty, disease, hunger, ignorance, unemployment and crime.

A far-reaching cabinet shuffle provided the first post-manifesto indications of how the government intended to address these challenges. At a glance the shuffle appears to add to the already considerable executive powers of the President, who has appointed himself Minister of Home Affairs, promising to take a hard line on crime, with the assistance of a newly-created Ministry of Prisons and Correctional Services. The fate of the National Planning Commission, in theory responsible for coordinating development policy and on the verge of submitting to Cabinet its first five-year development plan, hangs in the balance, after the replacement of the Director-General with an exceptionally young unknown (to the general alarm of NPC staff and donors), and the shifting of the Secretariat to the Ministry of Finance.

The combatting of ignorance will now be the responsibility of two ministries, the education portfolio having been split between a Ministry for Tertiary Education

(to all appearances supererogatory) and another for Basic Education and Culture. Unemployment becomes the key concern of Swapo Secretary-General Moses Garoeb, who adds Minister of Labour to his list of titles. Tackling disease remains the responsibility of Health Minister Nicky Iyambo, who acquires a new special advisor and an inspector of hospitals. As to how the most pressing and seemingly intractable problem of all, widespread poverty, will be addressed, there are few immediate clues.

Within Swapo's ranks, there are some who see the party's sweeping victory as potentially opening up the rigid internal hierarchy which has seen the party operate as a "Cabinetocracy" for the past five years, eschewing consultation and input from its own caucus. Many hope that the boost in confidence that a two-thirds majority may provide will permit more open discussion within the party itself, and make space for a larger role for the backbenches in government policy-making. This question remains open, however; the logic could easily cut in the exact opposite direction.

As for the Namibian people themselves: they have voted into office a party, Swapo, with a detailed manifesto and an electoral mandate sufficiently strong that it will not be able, next time, to point either to the opposition or the constitution as obstacles to implementing its promises. The implications? Perhaps one can do no better at this juncture than to quote the Prime Minister's undertaking on behalf of the government:

We are going to be judged on our promises in the manifesto. We have to address the needs of those who voted for us ... because we were elected on that basis. Now our performance can be measured. We are going to work, and when we fail we will admit where we have fallen short and why. And people will feel they have had an input. [Interview with the author, 29 January 1995]

Troubled Monarchy, Troubled Country: What Future for Lesotho?

BY LARRY SWATUK

Larry Swatuk is with the Centre for International and Strategic Studies at York University in Toronto.

On-going and often violent struggles – for political and economic power, for democracy and social justice – reveal the highly troubled nature of Lesotho's political economy. In March 1993, Basotho went to the polls for the first time in 23 years to return their country to democratic civilian rule. Their patience and hope for political stability has not been rewarded, however.

Following the January 1994 outbreak of fighting between rival factions of the armed forces, Lesotho's democratic shine has quickly been tarnished with what Richard Weisfelder terms "residues of authoritarian rule." According to John Bardill:

This continuing violence represents a threat to both domestic and regional security, a fact which Southern African leaders were quick to recognize when they declared their intention to intervene militarily to restore order if the need arises.

Moreover, the country remains anchored to a legacy of underdevelopment and authoritarian rule. Lesotho's one hope at viability beyond mere *de jure* sovereign status is the revenue to be generated by the Highlands Water Project. But this project remains highly controversial and in no way begins to address more pressing problems: labour retrenchment from South African mines; rising unemployment at home; and pending threats of radical environmental change.

Lesotho's latest travails are not new. Indeed, in reporting on the mountain Kingdom's August 1994

"King's coup," the *Johannesburg Star* suggested:

Observing the latest political drama in Lesotho is a bit like watching the re-run of an old film. Many of the old actors strut across the screen in ... a march of folly.

These "old actors" include, in the main, the military, the monarchy, the chiefs, and the older members of Lesotho's dominant parties,

Leabua Jonathan's decision to suspend the constitution and abort elections that had been clearly lost to Ntsu Mokhehle and the BCP; in 1986 overthrowing the government itself; in 1990 staging an intra-military putsch; in 1993 dictating many of the terms of democratic elections such that the RLDF and its Commander are now entrenched as part of the ruling executive; and since early 1994, med-



Ntsu Mokhehle at his inauguration in 1993

particularly the BNP and the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) whom Dick Weisfelder has labelled "an ossified gerontocracy." This is a depiction that, unfortunately, speaks volumes about the source and depth of political instability in Lesotho and state-makers'(in)abilities to overcome it.

The military

For over 20 years the military have been central actors in Basotho politics: in 1970 supporting Chief

dling in politics to the extent that many of the soldiers supported the "King's coup" which overthrew the democratically elected government of Ntsu Mokhehle.

Throughout this period members of the armed forces have raised havoc among Lesotho's people, occasionally striking for higher pay (including a sensational 1984 bank robbery in Upper Thamae), and engaging in factional warfare, either within the military itself or in

support of the BNP and/or the monarchy against other elements of Basotho politics.

The king and his court

Lurking in the background have been familiar faces: King Moshoeshoe II, who was, in January 1995, reinstated as Lesotho's monarch after having been exiled (yet again!) to Sweden in 1990; Hae Phoofolo, a member of the King's counsel, who most recently was de facto Prime Minister of the temporarily formed "provisional government" that displaced the BCP following the "King's coup"; Retelisitsoe Sekhonyana, a corrupt, career politician and political chameleon who survived Chief Jonathan's overthrow to emerge as the only hold-over politician in the then-newly formed Council of Ministers; and an increasingly inept – some would say "senile" – Ntsu Mokhehle, leader of the BCP and Lesotho's Prime Minister since April 1993, whose party has very inexpertly made the transition from guerrilla group to governing party and so exacerbated these problems.

During apartheid this instability was ignored by the international community, so long as Chief Jonathan continued to "bellow from the mountain-top." The country became a running joke to everyone on the outside – a sad and difficult state of affairs for all those forced to live within its juridical boundaries.

Since 1990, however, the world has become increasingly less tolerant of Lesotho's political hijinks. With Mandela's release from prison in South Africa and that country's steady movement toward multi-party, non-racial democracy, there came a corresponding pressure upon Lesotho's military government to go back to barracks. Given Lesotho's absolute dependence upon migrant labour remittances from South Africa and foreign aid from international donors, these were forces not to be resisted; or, if resisted, only at very high cost.

Toward democratic elections

The transition to democracy was made possible by a combination of internal and external factors: intense domestic agitation and external, primarily donor-led, pressure for political and economic "liberalisation," combined with factional fighting within the military to pave the way for democratic elections.

The 1993 elections were contested by 12 political parties and 7 independent candidates. According to Khabele Matlosa, "[w]hen the nomination courts were closed on January 28, 1993 about 241 candidates (of which only 23 were women and 7 were independents) were nominated for the 65 constituencies ... Of the total 736 930 voters who registered for the 1993 elections throughout the country, 532 678 cast their votes."

The Basutoland Congress Party, long headed by Ntsu Mokhehle, garnered 72% of the popular vote and all 65 constituency seats. The BNP, with approximately 22% of the popular vote failed to win a seat. Ironically, then, Lesotho's return to multi-party politics saw the emergence of a de facto one-party state. Retelisitsoe Sekhonyana, leader of the BNP, refused to accept the outcome, citing "irregularities" in voting procedures. Others argued for scrapping the first-past-the-post system, and for fresh elections based on proportional representation. To be sure, this situation created a recipe for disaster.

The emergence of Major General (formerly Colonel) Phisoana Ramaema as a champion of democracy was more circumstantial than deliberate. Ramaema emerged as head of the ruling Military Council following a putsch initiated by junior officers keen to replace Major General Metsing Lekhanya. Lekhanya himself was a reluctant leader. According to Weisfelder, "Worsening civil strife, a mutiny over pay and conditions of service in the paramilitary force, continued Lesotho Liber-

ation Army incursion, South African commando raids on ANC installations in Maseru and a South African economic embargo precipitated Lekhanya's seizure of power in 1986."

To be sure, these were contributing factors to the coup. But Lekhanya's rise is better explained by two additional elements: First, Chief Jonathan's increasing willingness to use force in the face of domestic opposition combined with an on-going disdain for the monarchy served to endear him to no one, save those who profited from the status quo. Second, Lekhanya was the perfect front man for a military/monarchy alliance. A relative unknown, Lekhanya was pushed to the fore by two of Moshoeshoe II's cousins, the notorious Colonels Thaabe and Sekhobe Letsie.

Following Jonathan's ouster, the military gave executive powers to the King. The King was said to rule in concert with a six man military council. This council also operated through an 18 person council of ministers comprised of 15 politicians and 3 military officers. Sekhonyana, it should be noted, was the only Cabinet Minister to be retained from the previous regime.

With time, Lekhanya became increasingly autocratic, much to the chagrin of the King, the Council of Ministers, and members of the bureaucracy. Matters eventually came to a head when, in 1990, he exiled the King to Sweden. In November 1990 Moshoeshoe II was dethroned and replaced (under protest) by his son and heir, Letsie III, who was never crowned.

According to Weisfelder "[w]ithin six months of ousting Moshoeshoe II, General Lekhanya was himself forced to resign at gunpoint by his fellow soldiers. Ironically the precipitating issues were not human rights, the struggle for democracy, or Lekhanya's failings, but unmet demands from the ranks for better pay."

In any event, Ramaema found himself an unlikely leader, and, under pressure from Basotho and the international community, he set the country on a path toward democratic elections.

From crisis to crisis

The transition to democracy seems to have created more problems than it has solved. Indeed, since April 1993 Lesotho has reeled from crisis to crisis, precipitated in the main by the overwhelming BCP victory. Clearly, Basotho viewed the 1993 elections as an opportunity to redress an historical injustice: Mokhehle, unjustly deprived of victory in 1970, would be returned to power in 1993. Yet, the BNP, smarting from an embarrassing defeat and now standing to be marginalized from the troughs, pork-barrels, and various other legal and illegal perquisites of power to which they had grown so accustomed, used the BCP victory as an opportunity to incite fear of autocracy among the general populace and of job insecurity among members of the military and police forces.

This situation set off yet another round of military meddling and mayhem in the public life of Lesotho. First, elements within the military became disgruntled at the BCP decision to raise governmental salaries. (Cabinet Ministers' pay was elevated from M3,000/month to M4,000/month; parliamentarians saw their salaries rise from M1,400/month to M4,000.) This policy was clearly out of line with the existing terms of agreement between the IMF and the Government of Lesotho. SAP conditionalities committed the Basotho government to, at minimum, limitations on and, at maximum, reductions to recurrent expenditures, including retrenchment of civil servants. SAP conditionalities had in the past been used as justification for denying the military's salary demands.

Mokhehle's promise to review all salaries fell on deaf ears, espe-

cially among more junior, highly-politicized members of the RLDF. Approximately 600 troops from this faction, housed at Makoeyane, some 8 kilometres from Maseru, took up arms and stationed themselves at the city's high point, the Lesotho Hilton. In response, 150 senior members of the RLDF (often described as the "professional" rather than "politicized" faction of the RLDF), based at Ha Ratjonose, on the outskirts of Maseru and within clear sight of the Lesotho Hilton,



BCP supporters at a rally

also took up arms. There ensued a running battle between the two factions.

While a 100% pay rise and a M20 patrol allowance were the central conditions for a return to barracks, there were other, more overtly political concerns which look to be less easily resolved. Among these were the Makoanyane faction's desire to see the BNP installed in power; and worries of job security arising out of fears that the BCP intended to replace BNP-supporters in the RLDF with former members of the LLA. According to Pontso Sekatle, "Before the January mutiny Sekhonyana

repeatedly warned soldiers that the government intended replacing them with the Lesotho Liberation Army." These questions about job security and force integration are sure to arise again.

Appeals from church leaders and members of Lesotho's NGO community were ignored. The uprising was only resolved with the intervention of the leaders of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and after 5 soldiers had been killed and 11 civilians wounded. This event was followed by a police strike and the kidnapping and murder by soldiers, in March 1994, of the Deputy Prime Minister. According to Pontso Sekatle, "The government took no action and no one has been brought to justice." In each case, the BCP has proved incapable of dealing with crisis.

The drama reached a high point in mid-August 1994. On 16 August, members of the BNP and MFP delivered a petition to King Letsie III requesting the dissolution of government and the restoration of his father, Moshoeshe II, to the throne. The next day, Letsie issued a decree suspending certain provisions of the constitution, dissolved parliament and deposed Mokhehle's democratically elected government. When members of the BCP marched to the palace on 18 August to deliver a petition demanding restoration of the government, they were met with gunfire. Four people were shot dead by the soldiers, who clearly supported the actions of Letsie III.

Again, outside intervention was needed to restore the BCP to power. To save face, Letsie III justified the entire exercise as an attempt to restore his father to the throne. And while his father, as of 1 January 1995, has been reinstated as King of Lesotho, it is doubtful that any kind of lasting solution to Lesotho's political constitutional crises has been achieved.

Indeed, as of mid-March 1995, Lesotho found itself once again

Casey Kelso - Africa Report

at the centre of regional security-building procedures. The Foreign Ministers of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe were in Lesotho to hold wide-ranging talks with members of the government, the police and defence forces, and with the King. According to a report by Radio Lesotho, "[T]he ministers emphasized the firm resolve of the three countries and the rest of the region to counter any attempts to overthrow the democratically elected government of the Kingdom of Lesotho."

Integration as an option?

Given its dearth of natural resources, Lesotho's economic viability has depended on a fragile combination of migrant remittances and foreign aid. Neither of these sources can be counted on in the long term. Faced with continuing political unrest, donors may be inclined to shift already limited resources away from Lesotho toward more hopeful endeavours. At the same time, the profitability of South African mines continues to decline. This has resulted in a slow but steady retrenchment of Basotho mineworkers. The question then arises, in the absence of foreign aid and migrant labour opportunities, what are the long term prospects for Basotho sovereignty?

Over the last 5 years, ideas concerning Lesotho's formal integration with South Africa have been widely discussed. Ntsu Mokhehle recently said, "once apartheid is completely eradicated and South Africa is totally free it will be 'inconvenient' for the Kingdom to remain independent." At the time, he envisaged Lesotho becoming part of a new federal state. Since coming to power, however, he has reversed his thinking and now argues for the return of the so-called "conquered territories," i.e. land taken from Basotho during the 19th Century's protracted period of warfare with the Boers.

Recognising the unlikelihood of state-makers ever voluntarily giving

up sovereignty, James Cobbe has mooted what he calls "the Eire option." According to Cobbe, this option envisages:

a situation similar to that existing between Eire and the UK, under which all citizens of Lesotho would have the same rights as South Africans when within South Africa, and would face no immigration restrictions when attempting to move to South Africa, but Lesotho

tion would afford Basotho freedom of movement to seek a living beyond Lesotho's borders without doing away with the state. In this way, "those groups within Lesotho who gain from the existence of the sovereign state, would continue to have it, and therefore would not lose in any serious way."

However, the prospect of thousands of Basotho coming to South



BCP supporters at a rally

and South Africa would continue to retain independent politics with the freedom to pursue independent tax, customs, fiscal, and monetary regimes if they wished. The implication is full freedom of movement of labour (and dependents), and full freedom of establishment (of enterprises), at least for movements from Lesotho to South Africa, but that the continuation of the Customs Union would be subject to mutual agreement.

Clearly, Cobbe is seeking solutions to pressing economic and demographic problems within Lesotho. Unlike integration, the Eire op-

Africa in search of work, or as families to live with primary wage earners at their job sites, is a controversial and politically-charged issue and, as such, is unlikely to find support among South Africa's Government of National Unity. The increasing inviability of the Basotho state cannot be ignored; nor can it be adequately addressed through an on-going series of regional peace-making missions.

Conclusion

Lesotho faces many future challenges that are only partially addressed through attention to party-

political democratic processes. These are problems whose essence is only partially captured by discussions regarding regional cooperation. Yet, Lesotho seems to find itself in a Catch-22: until politi-

cal problems are settled, no profitable action can be taken to address its difficult economic problems. As such, their negative impacts on ordinary Basotho are likely to increase. The longer these issues go unat-

tended, therefore, the more they will contribute to political instability. The country's leadership does not appear sufficiently interested in or enlightened to address these problems.



Crombie McNeill - CIDA

Swaziland

BY LARRY SWATUK

In Swaziland, King Mswati III faces a growing challenge to monarchical rule. According to Thulani Mthethwa, "Swaziland's ill political system can be described as a volcano whose eruption is imminent." In an effort to head off demands for multi-party democracy, elections were held in September and October 1993. Party political activity has been banned since 1973 when, in the wake of the country's first democratic elections (wherein the monarchy's political party, Imbokodvo National Movement, lost only one seat), the late King Sobhuza II suspended the constitution and declared a state of emergency.

Though the monarchy has continued to rule with an

iron fist, underground political movements have arisen to challenge what they see as the arbitrary and undemocratic nature of government in Swaziland. Following the formal demise of apartheid in South Africa, these movements have gained confidence and aligned themselves with other elements of civil society, particularly labour. Moreover, they have received encouragement from the international community, particularly the United States. To many observers, it is the lack of effective opportunities for political participation and expression that represents the major visible threat to Swazi security.

Despite these real stumbling blocks, there are signs that Swaziland has a fairly good chance at making the transition to democracy and achieving sustainable rates

of economic growth as well. Through the monarchy's private corporation, Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, Swazi royalty have managed to create more than a rentier state. Swaziland's economy is moderately diversified. It has an entrenched, multi-racial national bourgeoisie which engages in productive enterprise. Moreover, various elements of this bourgeoisie are able to independently accumulate capital and are even hampered by dictates and decrees of monarchical rule.

Setting aside questions of redistribution, for Swaziland to further deepen its economic base and perhaps enter a period of sustained and sustainable growth, the monarchy must stand aside and let emergent, though stunted, capitalist classes take control of the state so that they may be better able to advance their interests. Recent events suggest, unfortunately, that the monarchy is not willing to consider such a move.

Odd bedfellows

Unlike Lesotho, instability in Swaziland mainly results from an on-going series of workers' strikes. These strikes have been centred in the larger, urban areas of Mbabane and Manzini but have, on occasion spread to other areas of the country and other sectors of the economy. For instance, in 1989 strikes in the banking and transport sectors gave way to labour disputes in the civil service, and among brewery, plantation and mine workers.

The Swazi monarchy has been more than willing to use both force and blanket dismissals to end these strikes. More recently, however, strikes by teachers and workers at the Swaziland Posts and Telecommunications Corporation in July-August 1994 saw the government accede to their demands for increased wages. (The SPTC employees received a 13% increase while teachers received a pay rise of 13.5%.) This in spite of the expressed government commitment to limit recurrent expenditures, particularly relating to salaries of civil servants.

These limited strikes have widened to national proportions. During the first two weeks of March 1995, a mass stayaway called by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions brought businesses throughout the country to a standstill. The strike continued in spite of a court order restraining the union from engaging in strike activity.

According to one report, the trade union strike "has obviously been hijacked by the political elements." These "political elements" include most notably the Swaziland Youth Congress (Swayoco) and the Peoples United Democratic Congress (Pudemo). Both of these organisations came to prominence at the end of the 1980s, and have gained confidence in light of events in Eastern Europe and, more recently, South Africa.

Swayoco and Pudemo find common cause with labour in bringing to an end the arbitrary and authoritarian rule that characterises state-civil society relations in Swaziland. Given that party political activity, as well as more general forms of assembly, are illegal in Swaziland, labour activities are highly and overtly political.

Elections

Domestic and international pressures for democracy have continued throughout the post-1989 period. To ease this pressure, the monarchy, following recommendations of the two Vusela commissions, revamped its Tinkhundla electoral system. Elections were held in two rounds on 25 September and 11 October 1993. For the first time, Swazis were able to select their own candidates for the 55 seat lower house. (The King appoints 65 others to this house. These 120 parliamentarians then elect 10 people to Senate and the King appoints 20 others.) In the past, candidates were put forward by the chiefs.

2,094 people stood for election in the first round, which was designed to narrow the field to three candidates per district. Following the second round, only 3 members of the previous cabinet were returned to power. Among those defeated was Prime Minister Obed Dlamini.

Few beyond the monarchy were satisfied with either the outcome or the Tinkhundla system. The chiefs regarded it as further erosion of their traditional powers. Many citizens, particularly students and others supportive of Swayoco, Pudemo, Humaras (Human Rights Association of Swaziland), and Swanafro (Swaziland National Front) rejected the elections as a sham. According to Maxwell Lukhele, a member of Pudemo, Tinkhundla is a "vehicle used for political mileage by unscrupulous and politically bankrupt policy-makers."

These organisations have continued what might be termed a "guerrilla struggle for democracy." In June 1994, Pudemo presented a letter to the King demanding a "nationally constituted government and strict observance of basic human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Charter." On 1 March 1995, Pudemo published a proclamation calling for negotiations toward a new constitution. That document read, in part,

We as a Movement are firmly convinced that a formal and properly constituted negotiation process can only be effected through a broad-based representative National Convention . . . [T]he preliminary negotiations must not only be confined to the progressive forces but also be inclusive of traditional institutions - in fact it must be a microcosm of our society, i.e. political parties, political organisations, labour organisations, the youth, women's organisations, traditional institutions and other interest groups.

The proclamation also demanded the repeal of a number of contentious governmental decrees including detention without trial, the banning of political parties and mass organizations, and the prohibition of meetings, demonstrations and political associations.

How the monarchy will respond to this overture is unclear. What is clear, however, is the limited, primarily urban nature of these movements for multi-party democracy. Given that the power of the monarchy rests so heavily on the consent of those living in rural areas, until Pudemo establishes a base among the peasants, change will come slowly, if it comes at all.

After the Count is Over: Mozambique Now

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT, based in Maputo

In the wake of last year's Mozambican elections, the winning party, Frelimo, seems content to govern more or less as if nothing had happened. It has not moved with any great force to curb the kinds of corruption that lost it quite a few votes in the first place. It has certainly shown no signs of qualifying its recent preference for a rather extreme version of the neo-liberal option in its economic policy-making. And, for various reasons (some good, some bad), it has more or less turned a blind eye upon Renamo's claims to be a significant political actor in the new Mozambique, opting instead for a rerun of much the same kind of arrogance of power that has tended to mark Frelimo's rule in the past.

Renamo's difficulties

In part Frelimo must feel it can afford to follow such a course because, since the elections, Renamo itself has experienced serious difficulties in defining a strategy which would keep it alive within the political process. Indeed, the movement currently runs some risk of disappearing altogether.

Several factors have contributed to this situation. Firstly, now that the "Trust Fund" formerly provided by the "international community" to facilitate Renamo's transition from guerilla movement to political party is no more, the movement has, literally, no means of subsistence. Unlike Frelimo, which is firmly installed "in the system," Renamo is experiencing a severe lack of sources of finance. Thus Dhlakama's recent tour around Europe, which explicitly has had the request for funds at the top of its agenda, did not produce the results desired by

Renamo. In the transition period some important donors did agree, however reluctantly, to finance Renamo as a means of ensuring that the democratization process got safely into port (these in addition to other backers who, at the time, probably financed Renamo for rather less elevated political motives!) Now that the former group, in particular, has turned its back on the process - in part because Renamo is no longer seen to be a direct military threat - such donor support as Renamo can hope for is likely to come only from international companies and NGOs, and this in very much decreased amounts.

Moreover, politically, Frelimo and Chissano, as the electoral winners, have not left Renamo much room for manoeuvre. It is clear now - and Renamo seems to have been the last to grasp the point - that the former rebel movement will not be granted any share of power under the umbrella of some "government of national unity." Although the Americans and others continue to press for such an outcome (as they did both before and during the election period itself) Frelimo has firmly expressed its intention to govern alone, in the central government as well as in the provinces, even in the provinces where Renamo got the majority in the elections and had made some claim to fill the centrally-appointed governorship positions.

Frelimo's argument for proceeding in this way is twofold. At the central level, it says, it does not make sense to have Renamo both in the government and as opposition. And in the provinces, to have Renamo holding governorships would seriously jeopardize the unity of the

country and the possibilities of a coherent implementation of Frelimo's programme. There is some justice in such arguments, of course, although, as noted above, they might be more convincing were Frelimo itself not suspected by many observers of using the fact of its electoral victory merely to lapse back into an all too familiar brand of political arrogance.

In any case, in the absence of anything like a "government of national unity," there remain two national arenas where Renamo might have some hope of acting with political effect: the proposed "Presidential Forum for the Opposition" and the National Assembly. As to the former, two problems exist. One is that the president does not seem too concerned to speed up the formation of such a forum. For the time being, it is apparently not now regarded as being of any great importance in the establishment of the government's programme, having been linked more with its intermittent urge to build a democratic image. And in any case - it may feel - the social movements who are actually contesting the government's policies most assertively are not explicitly linked with the opposition.

Another problem with the forum for Renamo concerns the implications of participating in a presidential initiative which will be completely controlled by Chissano. Indeed, more generally, this is the challenge for Renamo: shifting from being a movement which in recent years had achieved - by its own efforts (albeit with a little help from its friends!) - a 50-50 position in the political life of the country, to a movement which only participates in spaces conceded by the winning party. This has been rather hard for Renamo to swallow, certainly,

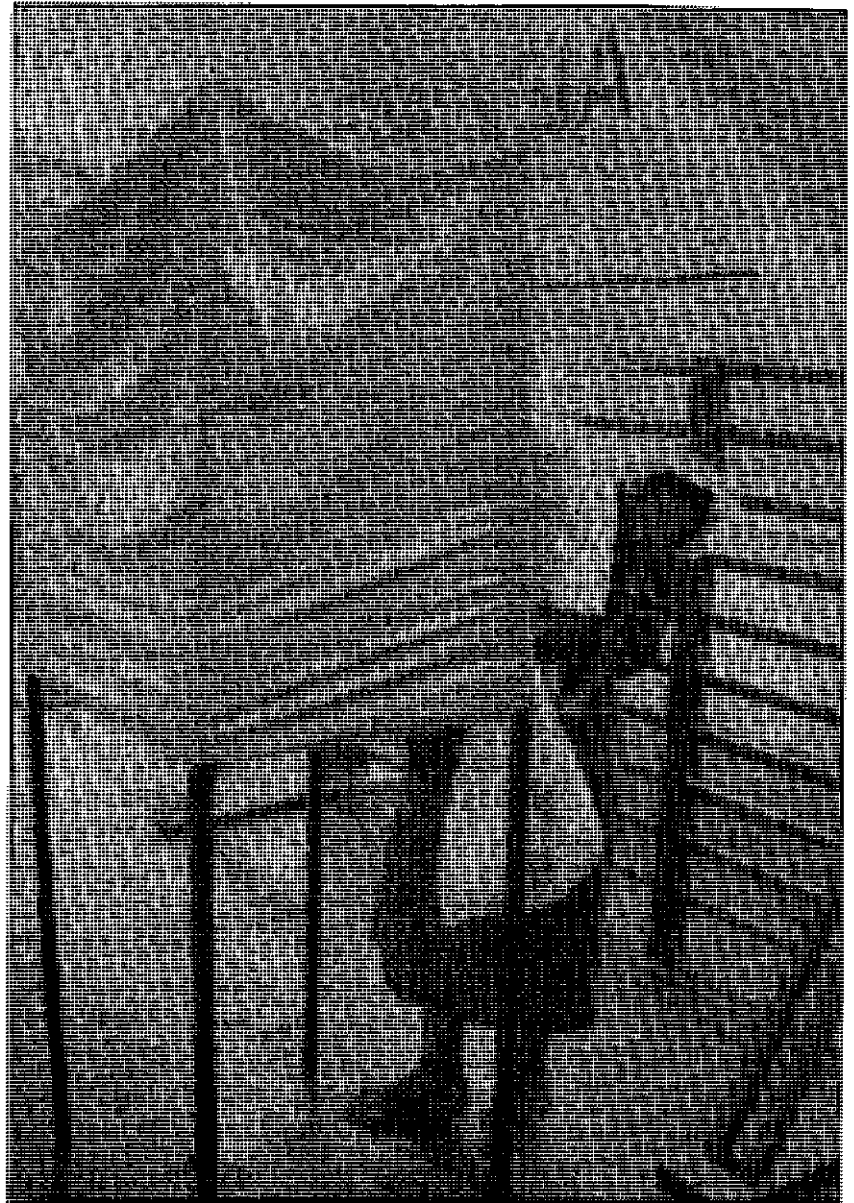
and the movement may well consider participation in the forum to be just too humiliating for it.

For the moment, therefore, it seems that the National Assembly will be the arena privileged by Renamo for carrying on political struggle at the national level. Indications of this are the recent replacement of Vicente Ululu (generally seen as not being all that dynamic) by José de Castro as Secretary General, and the appointment of Raul Domingos to lead the movement in parliament. Although a minority party in the Assembly, Renamo may well be betting on the erosion of Frelimo to eventually tilt the balance of things.

It's true that Frelimo is experiencing some real difficulties in maintaining the cohesion of its team of MPs. An indication of this was the desperate attempt, witnessed at the inaugural session of the Assembly during the voting to elect the Assembly's president, to maintain the system of open voting - in order to ensure voting discipline. And yet there is every reason to expect that Frelimo's erosion in the parliament will be paralleled by Renamo's own erosion: one sign of this was the recent "Graa affair" in which open contradiction surfaced markedly amongst Renamo MPs. Besides, Renamo seems to lack the skilled parliamentarians who might eventually turn the parliamentary arena to their advantage in any dramatic way.

The local elections

With small hope of making advances in this political battle, I am sure that a military agenda is still tempting, at least for some Renamo hardliners. However, in the current context this alternative would require a level of organizational sophistication Renamo manifestly does not have, and its former guerrillas, who have tasted at least the possibilities of a new life, only reluctantly would go back to the hardships of the bush in any case. It seems, therefore, that there are no real conditions for Renamo's military agenda to be resumed



Sergio Santimano - AIM

in anything like its old terms.

As a result, the "struggle for the districts" is perhaps the most promising terrain of struggle left open to Renamo. Since the movement holds important levels of control and popular support in a number of areas, this factor is giving the movement high hopes for the local elections which are expected to take place in 1996.

In my view, local elections will

become a central issue in the near future, and Renamo seems to be much more comfortable than Frelimo in this field. True, Chissano has made a clever move with the appointment of the Governors of Sofala, Nampula and Zambézia. These appointees are "locals," not implicated in the former provincial governments and (particularly in the case of Zambézia and Nampula) capable of taking strong "independent" decisions. However, there

hasn't been much more than this to the Government/Frelimo's strategy. While some restructuring of local administration is certainly on the cards, there are no signs that Frelimo will be able to solve the old problem of its relationship with the so-called "traditional authorities."

Yet, under present circumstances, these "authorities" cannot be ignored. For local communities – by now so disrupted by war and attendant social chaos and desperate to regain some stability – tend to find the permanent cabo ("headman") much more reliable than the occasional "state messenger" who is sent their way. For even the best-intentioned administrators apparently have difficulty in navigating this kind of local terrain. And in such settings, the cabos and other "traditional authorities" themselves often seem quite capable of taking advantage of the situation.

I think that the debate within Frelimo is probably around whether to make pacts with such "authorities" on the latter's own terms or to try to absorb/transform them as the lowest level of the state administration (by, for example, naming them as candidates in the elections). However there is reason to doubt the degree of sensitivity and nuance which the Government/Frelimo is actually showing in its approach to such matters. Indeed, it may well decide that the easiest way to handle things is merely to "buy" some of these authorities – with goods, money, a little formal power. But this is scarcely a long run solution to the challenge of reconciling the often seemingly divergent imperatives of national and local governance.

Indeed, the fact that the Government does not sense that this issue is urgent is quite worrying (it has even indicated, more or less in passing, that local elections might be postponed, much to the consternation of its main donors meeting recently in Paris). In contrast (as noted) Renamo must now feel that

its strength lies on this terrain over large parts of the country. It will no doubt use the local elections in order to retaliate for the fact that it was completely forgotten in the division of the post-electoral cake and to demonstrate its strength in the central-northern areas of the country. And if Renamo is successful in this tactic, the threat, unpredictable in its implications, of territorial division may again come to the surface.

Moreover, as long as the question of local governance remains unresolved, the government also will have even less chance than it might otherwise to show how relevant its overall policy programme is for regenerating the rural areas. As it is, the lack of political stability, of clear land tenure rules, and of investment in rural commercialization, taken together with the continuing spectre of landmines, means the situation in the rural areas is slow to evolve from emergency to recovery. And then there is the much broader question: could the government's rather extreme version of open market policies actually be expected to have a dramatically regenerative economic effect in any case?

This is a very large question, of course. But note, as one symptom of some of the problems being created by such policies, both the fact that land tenure issues are becoming particularly acute in the South and the reason why this is the case: in Matutuine the most recent charts reveal that most of the land has been freshly taken up by South-Africans, by Lomaco, and by a few local commercial agriculturalists, with the only remaining portion being the corridor for the elephant reserve! And yet the local population, until recently displaced by war, is now beginning to return in massive numbers. I'm sure the near future will witness both the invasion of the reserve and serious land disputes in this area.

A rising tide of criminality

To make things worse, the level

of criminality is increasing sharply in the rural areas, particularly on the main roads, where roadblocks are regularly being set up in order to assault and rob tourists, truck drivers and miners who are returning home. The fact that most often the bandits wear police and military uniforms links these happenings to demobilized soldiers.

This situation is even more serious in the cities, particularly in Maputo. Assaults on vehicles and shootings are becoming common at every hour of day and night, with the use of lethal force increasingly a part of robbery attempts. Nor can demobilized soldiers be blamed for all of this, since inflation, unemployment, and the like are reaching unbearable levels and covering a larger and larger percentage of the urban population.

True, the new army seems to be under control after a period of scattered riots (strong disciplinary measures were taken recently by the Ministry of Defence and the military commands). But, for its part, the police appear completely incapable of handling the deteriorating situation. It is important to note here that the various actors involved in the peace process gave only very marginal attention to the question of the police. Now the force's lack of operational means (including training) and its pervasive corruption stand all too starkly revealed – such corruption being the central theme of an important story in a recent Domingo, for example.

Yet in the very unstable environment that is present day Mozambique, social and economic recovery demands effective policing. In the past few days, after a long silence, the police have announced special measures to combat criminality. The effectiveness of such measures remains to be seen. Then again, this is merely one of many daunting question marks that hang like a dark cloud over Mozambique in the post-electoral period.

What's Left of the South African Left?

BY DAN CONNELL

Dan Connell, the author of "Against All Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution" (Red Sea Press, 1993), is researching a book on movements for democracy and social justice in Eritrea, South Africa, Palestine and Nicaragua on a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Viewed from one angle the South African Left appears to be in a downward spiral from which it might not recover:

- The national liberation movement, embodied in the African National

Congress, is drifting steadily rightward.

- The South African Communist Party, submerged in the ANC, seems to lack the distinct identity, profile and program to guide the country in the direction of socialism.

- The small parties to the 'left' of the SACP exist only on the margins and have little relevance to South Africa's political life, whatever their positions and programs.

- And the popular movement, once the driving force in the liberation struggle, is in tatters – worn down by the transition process, emasculated

by a totalizing liberation movement, stripped of its best leaders by the new government and by capital, and abandoned by foreign patrons whose funding now flows to the government, if it flows at all.

From another perspective, however, the Left can be seen as being in a rather strong position, perhaps the strongest ever, to effect structural economic and social change in South Africa:

- The liberation movement now holds the presidency, the overwhelming majority of seats in Parliament, the majority of cabinet po-



Wreath-laying following memorial service for Joe Slovo, Cape Town

sitions and all but two regional governments, with the SACP in a pivotal role to influence their direction.

- The Party's membership has skyrocketed from 2,000 at the time of the unbanning in 1990 to 60,000, though it is anyone's guess as to how many are active.

- The commitment to democratization is hegemonic in the culture-at-large and can only be attacked obliquely.

- A comprehensive Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is on the table, both as a program of action for the Left and as a benchmark against which to measure the ANC-led Government of National Unity's performance.

- COSATU remains strong, particularly at the shop steward level, if also confronted with complex new challenges and problems.

- The culture of mass engagement is deep-rooted and widely shared, even if many popular organizations and institutions that developed during the anti-apartheid struggle are in crisis, and even if the new government is uncomfortable with independent, popular initiatives.

- And a lively exchange of ideas is in progress within the broad Left that ranges from strategy and tactics in the current political transition to the definition of socialism itself, as well as the road to get there.

Limits of the possible

In fact, both views of the state of the Left are true, as far as they go: the Left is in trouble, but it is stronger than it seems at first glance. Part of the problem in assessing the Left lies in recognizing the limits to what is possible in this period, in both the South African and the global post-Cold War contexts. Certain aspects of the Left's apparent weakness are also the inevitable consequence of the prolonged transition to democracy that got underway in 1990 and that will continue well past the elections of 1999. Others, however, are the result of miscalculations and tactical

errors made during the early phase of this transition and need either to be corrected or compensated for now. In any event, the South African Left is entering uncharted territory at a moment when there are no simple signposts or ready formulas to tell them or us precisely what to do and where it will lead. Under these circumstances, it is far too early to render final judgments.

What is certain is that the next stage will be long and extremely complex. The democratic opening that culminated in the 1994 elections represented neither a decisive victory nor an absolute defeat for either side. As a result, the transition reflects the continuation of a struggle in new form between essentially the same class antagonists, albeit with less stark and absolute racial definition. To go forward, the Left will need new leadership, new cadres, new ideas, increased strength in the popular movement, which will have to be mobilized in new forms around new issues and objectives, and sustained solidarity from abroad. It will need to contest for power on new and unfamiliar terrain, for which it is not well-prepared, operating on several levels at once against an opponent much better-suited to this terrain and far better financed, though it is worth recalling that this same opponent once held a similar advantage in the anti-apartheid struggle.

A key challenge is to shift this terrain beyond government and the multiplying, expert-driven forums being set up to deal with (and absorb) the principal contradictions that divide South African society, and to extend the struggle back into the factories, the communities, the schools and other such venues, where the Left has latent strength and considerably more experience. This shift is complicated by strong opposition to extra-parliamentary popular protest from within the liberation movement itself, including from Mandela, who has characterized it as "social anarchy," but protest is

only a piece of the challenge - mass organizing that produces tangible changes in people's lives is the central task, whether or not it takes protest to achieve it. The ability to do this effectively is hampered as much by the disarray in which the popular movement now finds itself as by actions or policies of the government. If one is looking for measuring sticks by which to judge the strength of the Left and its prospects for the future, its ability to reconstruct and lead the popular movement over the coming 2-3 years will be one of the best tests, though the simultaneous efforts to transform the state, the armed forces, the civil service, and the legal and judicial systems, while writing a new constitution shouldn't be under-rated. And if the Left fails in this challenge, there is no shortage of demagogues ready to step in to whip up popular dissatisfaction for their own quite different ends.

ANC and SACP

A seven-week tour of South Africa in February and March, my third visit in ten years, revealed a decidedly mixed political bag. There was cynicism and disillusionment among some, particularly on the Left fringes (within and without the SACP). There was deep frustration in many of the townships and informal settlements among those who had hoped for tangible results from the elections a year ago and who have seen little or nothing come of them yet. Many parliamentarians from the Left were running so fast to keep up with the pace of their daily workloads that they had precious little time to reflect on the situation long enough to develop and articulate new strategies, let alone to assist in the sort of mass mobilization that had characterized most of their work in a previous political life. It was in the factories and the communities, however, that I found the most compelling evidence that there is still life on the Left, especially in the SACP.

While there is a spirited debate over the Party's independent role

and identity throughout the country, few seriously propose an alternative to it. As journalist Hein Marais put it: "The SACP is the reservoir of Left history and aspirations in South Africa." What Marais and other left independents argue is that the left current within the Party needs to be strengthened for it to challenge the rightward trend of the ANC and to provide effective leadership to a re-emerging mass movement. Other left critics within the Party, notably in NUMSA, the metalworkers' union, argue that it is time for the Party to either leave the

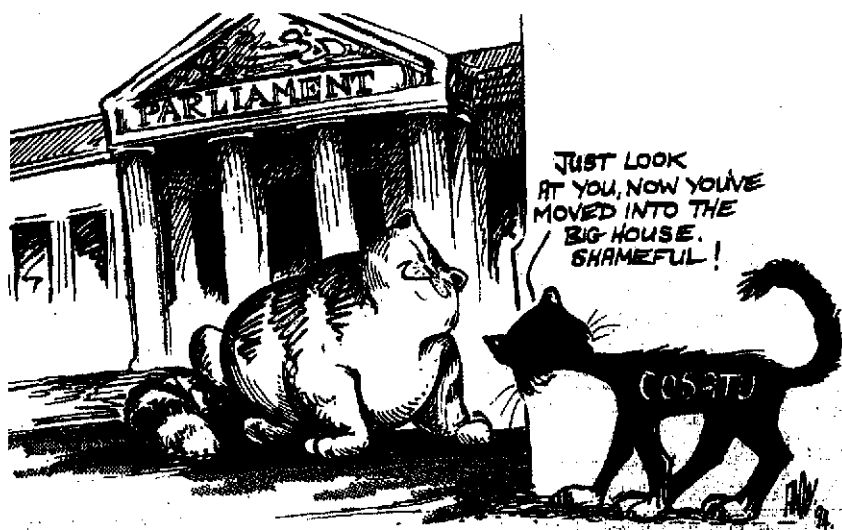
tend for power on its own before this emerging elite is so thoroughly entrenched that such struggle will become impossible. This might involve running candidates in elections in some areas. It might involve staking out independent positions on critical issues of the day, such as health policy, housing, access to higher education or the privatization of key utilities or enterprises. Certainly, it would involve playing a much more critical, *public* role toward the ANC and the government and, according to most left critics, would have to include a more explicit programmatic

socialist-oriented policies within the alliance.

Strategy and tactics

The "Strategy and Tactics" document drafted for the April Party conference spells out a number of examples for this, under the call to build socialism now. They centre on efforts to roll back or transform the market and to "socialize" sections of the economy, by which the Party means bring sections of the economy under popular control, not necessarily under the state. These concepts are premised on the formulation, floated last year in a paper by Jeremy Cronin, that socialism is a transitional stage of development in which elements of both the dying system and that which is emerging co-exist, as was the case with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and that the state is not simply a monolithic instrument of class rule, which can be captured or lost by one class (or the Party purporting to represent it) in a single, cataclysmic political moment. Rather, it is a complex and continuing site of class struggle. The main danger of such a formulation, as Cronin himself points out, is "boundless reformism." At the same time, an important consequence is that it gives the popular movement strategic significance in the struggle for socialism, beyond simply providing the troops for the seizure of state power or the levers to manipulate in support of those already struggling within the state.

The draft document also contains a call to give the struggle against gender oppression far more attention in this and future stages of struggle, insisting that "there can be no consolidation of democracy, still less an effective advance to socialism, unless we also, simultaneously, overcome patriarchy and actively transform gender relations." The representation of the struggle against patriarchy as a strategic objective is in part a result of internal party struggles - during which women in the leadership



S. A. Labour Bulletin

strategic alliance with the ANC and COSATU or act to transform it in such a way as to give the Party a far more independent identity as a working class formation within the alliance.

Already the effort by capital to blur racial divisions while heightening class differences is evident. While the gap between white and black income is closing, the over-all gap between rich and poor is widening. Few doubt that capital's main strategy is now to nurture and co-opt the new black elite. The principal debate on the Left comes up over whether the ANC leadership is on an unalterably rightward course and whether it is time for the SACP to come out of the closet and con-

commitment to struggle for socialism.

Party leaders, for their part, insist that this is no time for a break-up of the alliance. They argue that the national liberation struggle is not yet concluded, that the movement holds *position* for the next phase of struggle for democracy but not *power*, and that it is by no means settled how the struggle will come out. However, in a departure from past theoretical insistence that the lines between the two revolutionary stages are fairly sharp, they maintain that it is possible and necessary to struggle for socialism in the present transition period, and they say the Party is already playing an independent role in pushing for

won the right to screen all major documents for gender content before they are circulated – and it is increasingly reflected in the speeches and pronouncements of party leaders, women and men. What remains to be seen is how this commitment will be implemented at ground level.

Meanwhile, Cronin and others insist that the Party is having considerable influence within the liberation movement now, despite the ANC's rightward drift, which they readily acknowledge. They point in particular to the RDP, which arose initially out of an attempt by COSATU to draft a pact with the ANC to guarantee that it would not backslide on workers' issues once in power. The RDP evolved, with considerable input from the SACP and with an extraordinary degree of popular consultation, into the program of the ANC, though it has been stripped of much of its class content in a government "white paper" that spells out the state's implementation plans. Nonetheless, the base document remains as a blueprint for popular mobilization.

"To retreat out of the ANC now," Cronin continues, "would be to hand victory to our strategic opponents, whose agenda is also to capture the heart and soul of the ANC, and they are having some successes. If the Party and the Left were to move out of the ANC and constitute some other force – the SACP by itself or some kind of new formation, a workers' party is one that has been offered – it would be to play completely into the hands of our opponents. The masses are behind the ANC, and Left forces need to be there, where the people are."

As to suggestions that the Party field its own electoral candidates to challenge the ANC, Cronin argues that the people are not prepared for such non-antagonistic competition among allies – if it were to be so – and that to attempt it when people are just beginning to gain

experience in electoral politics would open the possibility of even more manipulation by the opposition of the kind that took place in the last round, where the IFP (Inkatha) effectively stole the elections in Natal and the Nats tricked the electorate in the Western Cape by playing to the ethnic fears of the "coloured" voters.

The popular movement

Whatever the SACP does as a party, the prospects for it and the Left in general will depend very much on the strength and character of the popular movement, which is at a crossroads of its own. The movement has suffered major setbacks, losing not only much of its human and material resources but its sense of purpose and identity. That this happened is hardly surprising – it is a problem that confronts all liberation struggles at the moment when they shift from resistance to governance and become detached from their base. The real question is whether or not the popular movement can be rebuilt in a new way to deal with new conditions and challenges and whether it can do so with enough autonomy from both state and party control that it can generate and sustain its own dynamic momentum.

The problems started with the return of the liberation movement in 1990, which almost immediately took over and dismantled many of the organizations that had powered the protest movement. The unbanning caught many popular movement leaders off-balance – people who had what Cronin terms a "B-team" mentality, seeing themselves as stand-ins for the first string in exile. This was notably the case in the women's and youth movements, where there had been strong grassroots organizations with their own distinct and diverse agendas. They were folded into the ANC and then turned almost overnight into vehicles for mobilizing their constituencies for political agendas set at the centre, starting with sup-

port during the protracted negotiations and continuing through the national elections. Their main tasks centred on fundraising, membership-building and voter registration. At their worst, the leagues served – then and now – merely as platforms on which to advance individual careers and ambitions. "The only thing the Women's League campaigned for in the early '90s was greater representation on the ANC delegation at the World Trade Centre negotiations, so it became a very elite politics," says one high level SACP leader.

After waffling for almost two years, COSATU voted to retain the independence of the trade unions and to demand a role as an institutional partner in a strategic alliance with the ANC and the SACP. COSATU now faces problems of coordination among its diverse affiliates, a growing gap between leadership and base, and the need to rapidly develop new layers of leadership at all levels. However, it is better positioned than most popular organizations to do so because of its strength on the shop floor, where its leadership is continually being renewed. A key issue for the trade unions is how to keep the membership engaged in political struggle when the new tripartite economic forums with representatives of business, the state and labour have the effect of marginalizing the base from the process, much as happened to the popular movement during the negotiations prior to the elections.

The civics, too, decided to stay independent, though they reorganized in 1992 into a unitary structure that carried with it many of the same centralist tendencies as those in the leagues, squelching local initiatives and in some cases serving as vehicles for careerism. The future of the civics remains unclear as the country heads into local elections, which will add yet another layer to the competing organizations that aspire to represent and respond to



Memorial service for Joe Slovo, St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town

community needs. There are already problems at the community level in distinguishing the role of the civics from that of the ANC branches (not to mention the branches of the SACP, whose main task is often to keep the ANC branches alive), and there are now civics forming which are patently undemocratic and anti-ANC.

All the popular organizations, including the trade unions, were hurt by the movement's entry into government – not only at the national level, but also regionally. Many were stripped of their most skilled and experienced cadres. Even when new layers of leadership existed, as in the trade unions, many lacked specific knowledge of issues coming before them and acted erratically. Some organizations collapsed alto-

gether in the face of these losses, notably in the alternative media. And there was further leakage to business, as people opted for salaried jobs over the movement-style subsistence wages and lifestyle to which they had been long accustomed. The October local elections will add to this problem, and there will undoubtedly be further losses to business, as the drive by capital to create a new black elite accelerates.

One can bemoan these losses, but not object to them, except in certain circumstances, for access to well-paid jobs by the black majority, especially Africans, is long overdue. The problem, as one SACP leader put it, is conflating elite affirmative action with structural transformation. It is also unreasonable to expect some activists to continue

to work for next-to-nothing, as comrades move into cushy jobs. The movement will have to adapt to this and find ways to reward those who choose to stay and slog it out in the trenches. Those in salaried positions will also have to kick back more than they are doing now to those who remain behind. (I was told that ANC members in government give 10% back to their organization, while SACP members tithe themselves 15%, though I have no idea how SACP members deal with dual obligations.) Allowance will also have to be made for family and other obligations over what is clearly going to be a protracted struggle.

One problem this movement has is too many meetings. As one activist put it, "We equate meetings with democracy." It

is not uncommon to find the most engaged organizers attending two and three meetings each day, including plant-based shop steward meetings, COSATU meetings, ANC branch meetings, SACP branch meetings, civic meetings, executive committee meetings and a host of others; often discussing the same issues. This holds dangerous potential for fostering exclusivity in the political leadership, especially as it affects women.

Women's emancipation

If the formal commitment to women's emancipation, so impressive in all the documents this movement produces, is to have any substance, the large number of meetings will have to give, as few women, unless single with independent sources of support, can devote this kind of time to meetings. By way of example, one woman on the SACP Central Committee was pointedly discouraged from running for re-election this year because she was forced to miss many CC meetings due to competing commitments, even though in each instance her reasons were deemed acceptable.

She is one of four elected women members (out of 30), and her experience is not atypical. An entire branch of the ANC Women's League in Johannesburg folded up last year because its members were being pulled in too many directions by competing organizational demands, according to Shamim Meer, one of the branch's organizers and a founder and former editor of *Speak* magazine, which also shut down last year.

Related to this is the loss of funding that the popular organizations have suffered. This is a real problem that needs to be addressed, but it also reveals a serious weakness carried over from the anti-apartheid era. This movement received more outside funding than any other liberation movement in history, with the possible exception of that in Palestine, and it came to depend on it



from book: Images of Defiance

for its existence. The challenge now is to find ways of operating without large-scale outside funding, to develop a level of self-reliance that permits political independence. Organizations will have to downsize and professionalize, relying more on part-time volunteers and small numbers of full-time, skilled, paid staff. They will also have to find sources of funding from South African constituencies, a task which could be made easier by new policies at the government level, such as changes in

the tax code. However, this will take a recognition by government – under pressure from below – that the independence of popular organizations is important.

Still, the most serious loss to the popular movement is the political glue that held it together – the struggle against formal apartheid. What there is now to replace it is the struggle for economic and social equality manifested most insistently in efforts to improve daily life. The SACP has committed

its main efforts in this regard to the RDP, and it will be judged on its ability to make this program work in the interests of the working class and the poor. The Party has targeted the new RDP Councils – with representation by all organizations operating in a particular community, from ANC branches and sectoral formations to NGOs and religious institutions – as the community forums of the future, where people's needs will be most clearly articulated and advanced.

Reconstructing a women's movement will be more difficult, since any attempt to start a national organization is certain to be seen as a challenge to the ANC Women's League and attacked on that basis. The more likely scenario will be for organizations of women to develop around specific issues and concerns, like housing or health care, in much the same way that the very strong women's movement in Brazil developed in the 1980s. These issue-based groups could launch specific campaigns and alliances around common objectives, such as the alliance that developed around the South African Women's Charter or the more grassroots-based coalition represented in the National Land Commission.

It was encouraging in this regard to find former activists of the Natal Organization of Women meeting regularly to figure out how to restart the important grassroots mobilizing they were doing in the 1980s before they voted to dissolve the organization into the ANC. The Women's League never took up the project work that NOW had made the cornerstone of its eminently successful mobilization. Here, too, the question is: what resources will the SACP deploy to further this organizing process, and what will the Party do if this provokes the ire of the Women's League?

Repositioning the Left

The coming years will be a time for consolidation and repositioning

for the South African Left. We are not likely to witness dramatic breakthroughs. Instead, there will be the less visible community organization, institution-building, leadership development and cadre development. The SACP is talking about running semi-annual political schools for activists in the mass movement, though they say they cannot afford a full-time cadre school. "We have to find a way to develop cadres that can understand how to be active in the new context – how to engage the powers that be, whether in the state or outside, without being co-opted," says Langa Zita, who will shortly take charge of the party's political education program.

"At the political level, we have to defend the space we have – the democratic dispensation," Zita adds. "But we must seek within that process to consolidate and defend the legitimacy of mass struggle. Once everyone knows that if you provoke the popular masses in South Africa, they will respond, you are creating an environment to begin to think strategically. Without an active base, you are toothless."

Zita is one of those in the SACP who also argues that the subordination of the Party's identity to the ANC throughout the exile years was a "strategic error," though he opposes any moves that might jeopardize the alliance. Instead, he says he wants to see the Party develop its own mass base, to stand up and criticize Mandela, if that is what seems to be called for, and to act within the ANC as an organized force for working class interests. "The issue is not to break the alliance but to transform it into something like a patriotic front," he says.

The trade unions, too, face new challenges, with strong pressure from capital and from the state to forego actions that disrupt production, in order, so goes the neo-liberal argument, to strengthen South Africa's ability to compete

in the global market. In this context, NUMSA's 1995 campaign – the first in two years, complete with T-shirts, buttons and banners – may be a model of how the unions can reactivate the locals and draw the membership into direct participation again. Behind the slogan "Close the Apartheid Wage Gap," the main objective is not to raise wages, apart from cost-of-living, but to shrink the number of grades for workers in the metals and auto industries from 14 to five, and to reduce the grade differentials to no more than 10 percent in an effort to address worker inequality. This will be linked to a drive to gain access to more skills for those in the lower grades. In March the major COSATU affiliates also met to coordinate wage demands, positioning themselves to act in concert in the event they determine strike action is necessary in the up-coming bargaining cycle. One question here is: will the SACP lead or follow in this mobilization?

The coming period will also provide the country's progressive NGOs with a critically important capacity-building challenge with regard to the popular movement. This challenge comes at a time when the government will be trying to co-opt the NGOs into simple delivery channels and foreign funders will seek to build them into interlocutors with the grassroots, substituting, if not overtly undermining, a re-emergent militant popular movement. Inevitably, this will lead to confrontations with the new government. Will the Left, and in particular the SACP, play a leadership role in these confrontations, or will it take a low profile in an attempt to protect its position in the liberation movement and in the state? This is one of the key places where we will test the mettle of the Left, but the evidence is not likely to be sufficient to draw conclusions for several years. A last question one might ask is: where will the solidarity movement be then?

Canada and Southern Africa: The Liberal Aid Massacre of 1995

FROM OUR OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

The federal government has completed the Foreign Policy Review, and Finance Minister Paul Martin has delivered his 1995 budget, a textbook example of a structural adjustment budget. What might Southern Africans, or Canadian friends of Southern Africa, expect from Canada's foreign policy towards the region, and from Canadian aid policy in particular? And the answer? Not a lot: cuts, conditionality, and commercialism.

The commercialisation of aid

Certainly the broad brush-strokes of policy statement and budget priorities warrant such a conclusion. Only too evident is the continued, perhaps final, retreat from the "humane internationalism" that was once said to underpin Canada's stance on development issues. This recognised the danger and inequity of the North-South divide, and the need for redistribution, if only to stymie the Reds and make the world's trading economy more effective. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was born in 1968 of a redistributive vision - unevenly realised at best, and probably self-serving, but redistributive nonetheless.

The 1995 budget, by contrast, follows the pattern of the Tory years of the late 1980s and early 1990s: a cutback of the total aid budget, an embrace of the commercial logic of "penetrating markets," of "investing in winners" rather than the poor, of selective support to countries with "emerging markets" at the expense of considerations of human rights and democratisation.

Africa, minute in the global market, is peripheral to this vision.

The main points of the foreign policy framework and the budget will probably be only too familiar to SAR readers by now. Some of the detail may be less so, and is outlined here:

(1) *Canada in the World*, the government's February statement on foreign policy, asserts that "the promotion of prosperity and employment" is the primary objective of Canada's foreign policy. To pursue that objective, the government commits itself to expanding NAFTA and working for the implementation of the World Trade Organisation. The Liberals foresee building an "international business 'team'" with the provinces and the private sector, to assist Canada to compete in the dominant markets of the world, building on our comparative advantages.

(2) The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) has produced a useful detailed commentary on the government's statements. The Council rightly points out that the pervasive commercial focus overrides any notion of a foreign policy based on values or principles. It also displaces any forceful argument of environmental sustainability or of poverty and global social justice. Human rights are not part of the fundamental objectives of foreign policy, but - we are told - will be promoted by trade and economic liberalisation.

The government statement asserts the need to align Official Development Assistance with its broader policy objectives. For many, this only deepens the well-founded fear that CIDA's practices will be driven by commercial calculation. Certainly there is no hint of major reform of Canada's aid policy. The

program priorities are those currently espoused by CIDA: basic human needs; women in development; infrastructure; the environment; human rights; democracy, and good governance; and private sector development. Significantly, public participation does not appear as a priority for the aid programme. Conversely the private sector is seen as an important partner, and tied aid remains, a "mutual benefit" to Canada and developing countries.

(3) Three weeks after the federal foreign policy response, Paul Martin delivered a budget devoted to "fiscal balance." A budget to mollify the markets, it features handsome transfer payments to banks and bondholders, financed by spending cuts to social programmes and job cuts to the public service.

The total Official Development Assistance budget is cut from \$2.594 billion in 1994/5 to \$2.061 billion in 97/98, a reduction of 21%. The ODA budget for 95/6 now stands at \$2.22 billion; CIDA's share of this (approx. 80%) is \$1.73 billion, a cut of \$312 million, or more than 15%.

Within CIDA, the divisions that were hit the hardest were those financing non-governmental organisations, and bilateral (government-to-government) programmes. Voluntary sector support was reduced by \$45 million from 1994/5 (from \$244 million to \$199 million), a cut of more than 18%. Bilateral geographic programming was cut by \$150 million to \$731 million, a cut of 17%.

Programmes supporting private-sector co-operation, humanitarian assistance, and bilateral food aid were reduced by smaller amounts, on the order of 10%.

Canada's contribution to international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF was cut by less than 10%, from \$435 million to \$400 million.

(4) The February budget offered few details on how the budget cuts would be assigned to non-government programmes and agencies. These specific decisions were taken "at the highest levels," especially by the Minister, André Ouellet, in the last weeks of March. Only now, in early April, are the details and immediate consequences of these cuts becoming clear. They are grim indeed. The budget cuts to the voluntary sector will set in train a major reduction in programming in Canada and in the South, indeed a profound restructuring of the development NGO sector in Canada.

"Restructure" means cut, cut, cut

The marginalisation of public participation in the foreign policy statement has been implemented with a vengeance. CIDA has cut completely its funding to nearly a hundred smaller organisations across the country devoted to public education on global development issues. Not only have the Liberals accelerated the decline of federal support to the voluntary sector that began in the early 1990s, they have added something not even the Tories achieved - a near-total cut to resources for public education on development issues in Canada. The dollars involved are minuscule within CIDA's budget - \$11 million, 6/10ths of 1% - but the cuts will seriously damage a network built up over a generation, and hundreds of people will lose their jobs. For those committed to this work, it's back to church basements. Although some of the larger agencies like OXFAM-Canada and CUSO will retain a presence across Canada, their resources will be stretched thin - in some cases, radically cut back - and they will not be able to replace the dev ed network.

One of Canada's most effective organisations in promoting the development of African NGOs, Partnership Africa-Canada, has been dismantled. Formed in the mid-1980s after the huge wave of popular financial support for famine relief, PAC grew into a coalition of more than a hundred agencies with programmes throughout Africa. The *raison* of its work was strengthening NGOs and citizens' associations in Africa. It had succeeded in giving priority to issues of gender, to women's organisations, to effective evaluation - all areas where NGO programming is often weak. Its annual budget exceeded \$15 million, financed by CIDA monies used to match Canadians' private donations.

The Special Fund for South Africa, whose renewal (\$5 million over three years) had been announced by Minister of State Christine Stewart, is now cut entirely.

Other similar "arms-length" coalitions and funding mechanisms have been dismantled or drawn back into CIDA. They include the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Fund, administered by CCIC, and used effectively by many Canadian NGOs to support post-disaster reconstruction programmes by their Southern partners.

The clear overall trend, notes the CCIC, is a centralisation of funding towards the larger, professionally-managed organisations based in central Canada. Nonetheless, CIDA's contributions to agencies like CUSO and OXFAM-Quebec have been cut by some 15% for 95/6, often with similar cuts to follow in recent years. The same patterns hold for co-operatives, and for universities and colleges, with only trade unions as a sector being increased (by 4%). The specific individual and cumulative effects of such cuts are hard to predict. NGOs are still trying to assess the damage, and figure out how to respond. We may be sure of contractions and disruptions in programmes; there will likely be merg-

ers and closures of some agencies as well.

A bleak and regressive picture, then.

An exception for Africa?

There may be room for a more nuanced reading, as Canadian policy relates to Southern Africa. It is hardly optimistic, and may be more a working hypothesis than a well-supported conclusion. Briefly: within Canadian policy, Africa is in the domain of the political rather than the commercial or economic. The feds' interpretation of "Canada's strategic interests" will tend to align aid and foreign policy more closely with commercial objectives in Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific Rim. There may thus be some space for more socially progressive policy initiatives within Africa - support for strengthening popular organisations and citizens' associations within a maturing civil society, for programming aimed at basic needs, some relief for the burden of official debt, and so on. (And, a cynic might add, the humanitarian assistance budget will be maintained, evidence of "official compassion" to match the readiness of Canadian citizens to respond generously to appeals for disaster relief.)

Ironically, Africa's marginal status within the global political economy may soften the prevailing commercial orientation and open some options for the aid programme not present in, say, Latin America.

One should not overstate this prospect. By the CCIC's estimate, Africa will be disproportionately hit by the cuts to the voluntary sector. These are not restricted to the "dedicated" funds like PAC and the South Africa Special Fund. Many of the individual agencies suffering cuts devoted a substantial amount of their programming budgets to Africa. And even at the bilateral level, the overall federal commitment to Africa is modest enough. (Canada's bilateral al-

location for Africa and the Middle East in 95/6 will be C\$328 million – at 45% the largest single portion of CIDA's geographic budget, but still reduced by \$68 million, or 20.5%. By comparison, the public debt of sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of 1993 was US\$179 billion.) We are, then, talking of a working premise to be confirmed, one that at best modifies an overall picture that is both gloomy and retrograde.

So what's going on? First, some working assumptions about Canadian aid policy in the current conjuncture that are necessary to frame my assessment.

(1) We are experiencing and witnessing the end of the Western postwar aid "project." Almost all of the OECD countries are reducing their aid budgets (Japan is a notable exception), and changing their composition towards market promotion and humanitarian relief. This shift has become more marked with the end of the Cold War in the late '80s, and of the ideological competition that accompanied it.

The energy of politicians, senior officials and the heavy hitters of the business world is now devoted to creating and consolidating trade and investment blocs like NAFTA. More generally, the organising pole of economic policy and foreign relations is the drive for profits, to be promoted by "liberating the markets" – deregulating transnational corporations and financial institutions.

Within Africa, the IMF has played the role of priest and gendarme to ensure compliance with this agenda, with the World Bank firmly in support. The notorious SAPs provide the policy expression and prescription. (African arguments for alternative reform policies have been given short shrift.)

(2) Canada is more and more becoming a country of the Americas, driven by an official and corporate agenda that has taken us into the OAS, the FTA and NAFTA, and

most recently, the Action Plan for the integration of the Americas.

(3) These two developments underlie "Canada's strategic interests," in official eyes at least. The end of the postwar aid regime also means that CIDA is ever more a bit player in federal policy forums. The agency is politically adrift, lacking a clear and legislated anti-poverty mandate or a powerful leader or ally in Cabinet, unable to offer any competing vision either to Canada's Ministry of Finance or the nostrums of the World Bank or the IMF. Such political weakness is hardly a recent phenomenon, but is especially marked by comparison with the power of the Finance Minister's agenda.

Is there any room here for progressive aid initiatives in Southern Africa?

Progressive prospects?

Within the bilateral branch of CIDA, staff recognise the need to support African initiatives to build the capacity of Africa's social, political and economic institutions, at the community, national or regional level. South Africa and Southern Africa receive particular attention, though the priority of the region within the (reduced) bilateral aid budget for Africa is still to be determined. Programme documents also recognise the necessity to redirect aid programmes to meet basic needs: food security, literacy, water supply, shelter, and primary health care, with a particular focus on the needs of poor women in both rural and urban areas.

Within CIDA's bilateral programme for Southern Africa, as elsewhere within the Africa section, officials are open to collaborating with both Canadian and African NGOs in programmes aimed at strengthening civil society. (By contrast, CIDA's practice in the Americas has been much less open to comparable initiatives.) It's not clear whether this will move CIDA's programming significantly away from conventional patterns of infrastructural spend-

ing and balance-of-payments support such as food aid and lines of credit. And, it is another question entirely whether CIDA has the operational programming experience or capacity to develop these sentiments into a coherent framework or methodology – certainly with the cuts to agencies like PAC, CIDA has fewer reliable and effective actors to call upon.

How then are we to weigh these countervailing signals within the overall picture? Against these possibilities are some fairly tough political realities.

It's important to point out first, the apparently anomalous nature of the government's moves within the aid programme. If African policy is the domain of the political, it may also be the domain of the idiosyncratic. When other federal departments are devolving budgets to private agencies for implementation, CIDA is going against the tide. It is recentralising by cutting NGO administration of the aid programme. Observers close to the government see this not as a twist on the "reinventing government" agenda, but an expression of the power of Ouellet, widely considered to be a control freak. The evident space for personal intervention by a powerful minister could well lead to additional cuts, particularly to NGOs.

This becomes more likely if one sees the cuts to global education as part of the broader agenda to end state funding to progressive advocacy organisations, dismissing them as "special interest groups." To the Liberals, the costs may be slight. Neither Canadians involved in global education nor African NGOs are likely to vote for the Minister. Politically, they figure to be a soft target.

Nor is the aid budget simply the whimsical intervention of Ouellet. The overall approach to the aid programme – if not the detailed allocations – mirrors the logic of an internal position paper prepared by

the (then) Department of External Affairs in 1992/3, in the last year of Tory rule. Widely denounced at the time, it was nominally withdrawn from consideration. It endorsed a heavily profit-oriented vision of aid, summarised candidly by a source at the time as "invest in winners, not the poor." There is a clear fit between the final political decisions of 1995 and the bottom line thinking of the earlier paper. Discredited or not, its opinion seems to be all too alive and well.

Nor should we expect too much from the more "open" sections of CIDA. Even if Bilateral is ready to explore "capacity-building" or "basic needs" programming in Southern Africa, CIDA staff themselves are sceptical about the agency's experience and capacity to carry out this kind of work. In a country like Zambia, for example, as much as 60% of CIDA's annual aid budget in the 1980s was made up of grants for balance-of-payments support. Even if Zambia's complete debt burden were lifted by the western donors

and the international financial institutions, an agency like CIDA has limited practical experience with on-the-ground programming in the social sector on which to base a different approach to its budget. Moreover, the cuts in the current budget will seriously limit its options for collaborating with Canadian or African NGOs. Finally, it is not yet clear how CIDA's priorities for the region will address the choice between the daunting and complex work of reconstruction in Mozambique and Angola, or easier and more commercially attractive options with the private sector, particularly in South Africa.

So, the various doors may not be completely closed to progressive initiatives in the aid program. But just how real and extensive these options may be, how they can be leveraged, remains to be seen.

Fight back

And, as always, what to do? The historic change in the aid project, the reworking of relations between NGOs and the state - these suggest

we are at a fairly major watershed. Responses are needed at several levels:

(1) individuals and organisations should challenge the Minister of Foreign Affairs, directly and through their own MPs, on the effects of the budget:

- demand government commitment to NGOs and citizens' associations in the South, as well as to global education and support for public policy participation in Canada

- demand that budget cuts fall on contributions to the IFIs, on Bilateral programmes (Bilateral regularly fails to expend its allocations), and on private-sector collaboration.

- demand an end to tied aid and commercial logic for Canada's aid programme: if we are going to have a smaller programme (this seems inevitable) it should at least be focused on poverty and the basic needs of poor people; and, where possible, should be designed and delivered in concert with community-based organisations.

(2) With the evident limits on even a liberal official aid policy, Canadian development NGOs and their Southern partners will have to reconsider their links with the Canadian state. Many Canadian organisations have based their work with CIDA on the assumption of "non-antagonistic" interests and relations. These may not hold any longer.

(3) More generally, it is time for activists to explore new forms of collaboration and support across sectors, regions and national boundaries. The issues of social justice are clearly global now; at the same time, there will be modest (and diminishing) federal support for international co-operation among community, popular, and nongovernmental organisations. Even as we challenge wrong-headed official policy, we will have to begin to reach out to those with whom we have common cause within Canada and beyond, to define new forms of "peoples' diplomacy."



Margaret Adam

Amnesty not Amnesia: Dealing with the Past in South Africa

BY COLIN LEYS

Alex Boraine, Janet Levy, Ronel Sheffer (eds.), *Dealing with the Past: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, IDASA, Capetown, 1994, 175 pages (R49.96).

Dealing With The Past: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa is a collection of presentations, by South Africans and others with relevant experience from around the world, to a recent conference held in that country in December 1993. The topic? How newly democratic regimes can best deal with those responsible for crimes of state and gross abuses of power committed during the period of the previous regime. The book is reviewed here by noted Canadian Africanist Colin Leys whose own most recent book, co-authored with John S. Saul, is *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword* and deals with, among other things, related themes regarding the Namibian experience.

The Truth Commission Bill, officially known as the National Unity and Reconciliation Bill, may well be the most important piece of legislation to be dealt with by the South African Parliament this year, and it is already one of the most contentious and delicate.

The Bill addresses the last-minute "post-script" added to the transition constitution's Chapter on Fundamental Rights, which in essence says there will be no trials or punishments for political crimes committed secretly in the past provided these are now exposed and acknowledged, so that the victims may begin to forgive. As an Uruguayan woman whose child was "disappeared" is quoted in documents from the *Dealing with the Past* Conference as having said, "I am ready to forgive, but I need

to know whom to forgive and for what."

The debate has already raised some key issues in South Africa. One is how far senior political figures will accept responsibility for crimes carried out by their subordinates. (The police have threatened to document the personal responsibility of senior National Party figures if the names of amnestied police officers are to be gazetted, as the draft Bill proposes; they want senior politicians to accept blanket responsibility and leave their subordinates unnamed.) Another issue is whether, if the names of those amnestied are published, the particular crimes for which they are pardoned should be published too, or just the particular class of crime (e.g. "murder," as opposed to the murder of X). A third issue is whether the hearings should be in private, as also provided for in the government-agreed Bill. (Victims of crimes understandably oppose this. But closed hearings seem unavoidable if the Commission's job is to establish only what happened, and not to substitute itself for a court of law deciding whether particular individuals are guilty of crimes.) Yet another issue concerns the period covered by the amnesty and the period during which it can be invoked. Security personnel want it to cover crimes committed in the election period from December 1993 to May 1994, whereas the end-date agreed in the transition negotiations was the end of 1993; and they would like to be able to invoke the protection of the amnesty at any time in the future - i.e. in the event crimes not exposed by the truth commission come to light later.

Also beginning to emerge from the debate is the problem of scope. The Human Rights Watch

estimates that there were over 22,000 political killings between 1984 and 1994. How many were there before 1984? And how many cases of torture (not to mention the hundreds of thousands of routine - but nonetheless illegal and atrocious - beatings)? How many recorded deaths in detention? And how many still unaccounted-for disappearances? How big a staff, working for how many months or years, would it take to cover this delimited range of crimes?

For South Africans wrestling with these highly charged issues, so crucial to any genuine healing of past wounds, the documents contained in *Dealing With The Past: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, should be a vital reference-point.

The Conference heard from human rights workers and activists in ten countries in Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe that have emerged from repression in the past two decades. Among those who took part in the Conference was Jose Zalaquett, a member of Chile's National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, in some ways a model for the one proposed now for South Africa. Virtually every problem now being confronted in the South African debate has been an issue in one or more of these countries; and the way the Conference participants, both foreign and South African, handled these problems leaves a deep impression.

These are morally and intellectually formidable people, veterans of hard struggles. In the reported final discussion there was a telling exchange between some of them and Heribert Adam, who argued that "one can be fairly sure a truth



Roger Bosch - Impact Visuals

commission or a witch hunt would lead to more human rights violations and more confrontation" (p. 144). As Alex Boraine pointed out, the Chilean truth commission did not publish the names of anyone who appeared implicated in the crimes it investigated (i.e., it was not a court of law, and whether anyone not covered by amnesty was subsequently prosecuted was a matter for the judicial authorities). Tagging a truth commission-plus-amnesty a "witch-hunt" is really to argue for not dealing with the past at all; but experience shows this can all too easily lead to an eventual renewal of violence through private revenge or even renewed warfare. Croatia was cited by Aryeh Neier of Human Rights Watch as a significant case in point. Incoming President Tudjman's failure to acknowledge the atrocities done to Serbs at Jasenovac by the former Croatian Ustachi regime may well have triggered the present fateful conflict between the two republics. In other words, there is nothing "realistic" about opposing the idea of full disclosure, and it would be hard to find a more tough-minded group of realists than the ethics experts collected here.

What are the main issues as

these experts saw them? First, why deal with the past? The answers the experts gave, crudely summarized, are:

(a) because the victims need to have the crimes against them exposed and acknowledged before they can forgive (as Mary Burton remarked, "We keep hearing... about forgiving and forgetting, about wiping the slate clean. The trouble is that we have not even written on the slate yet" (p. 122)) - and unless there is real forgiveness, the risk of mass public frustration (and of private acts of revenge), leading to fresh rounds of illegal repression by security personnel, and renewed civil war, cannot be ruled out; (b) because the rule of law must be asserted; and (c) because - though less certainly - exposure of secret crimes makes it less likely that people will resort to them again.

Second, what means may be used? They are: truth commissions to bring the crimes to light, followed by acknowledgement on the part of those responsible; reparations to victims (also envisaged in the mandate of the South African truth commission); disqualification of perpetrators from holding certain

kinds of positions; prosecution and punishment of individuals for crimes.

Third, what are the political constraints which limit the use of these means? They are: the political power still exercised by those responsible for crimes; and - more intangible, but still very important for the ultimate aim of winning a broad consensus for the rule of law in the future - how far the crimes had support from a significant part of the population. Is it a case of a "regime of criminals," whose actions more or less everyone repudiates, or of a "criminal regime" with which, to some extent, very large numbers of people were morally complicit - people with whom the victims must now live? In the former case, crimes can be punished through the courts (as in Chile where in early 1994 people were still being tried for crimes committed after 1978 - a period not covered by an earlier amnesty); whereas in the latter case, it may be counter-productive, if not impossible (in terms of sustaining the transition to democracy) to bring anyone to justice. The relevance for South Africa of both kinds of constraint

is obvious – even if working out what exactly they make possible and impossible is very difficult.

Indeed all the issues involved in dealing with the past bristle with difficulties, and yet all of them seem important and urgent – as André du Toit neatly put it, they present “an overload of relevance,” necessitating tough choices about priorities, and realism and clarity about how to achieve them. For instance, how wide should the mandate of the truth commission be? Given the need for reasonable speed, both to get at the facts and to initiate the genuine reconciliation for which exposing the truth is a precondition, the Commission cannot be asked to look at every abuse, every illegal act, or even every beating, that the apartheid regime’s police and army meted out, even though people (both the individual victims and whole communities) may well feel deeply bitter about them.

André du Toit suggested that the commission should focus only on the so-called “third force,” on state complicity in death squads and deaths in detention. Such a mandate, which does not include torture, would undoubtedly occupy even a well staffed commission for many months (the Chilean Truth Commission, which focused only on people who had been killed or tortured or “disappeared,” had a staff of sixty and took a year, and the scale of abuse in South Africa has been far larger). But it seems agreed that torture will be covered by the South African commission: one wonders how long this might take, and whether a very prolonged process might not become counter-productive. At the conference, Albie Sachs went so far as to say that “anything that caused severe pain on the basis of racial domination must be part of the mandate” (p. 146); but could anything so potentially wide-ranging be reconciled with the need for rapid results? Latin American experience strongly suggests it is wise to aim for

accomplishing something solid fairly quickly, while the political climate is still favourable, even if this means doing so on a relatively narrow front. There is real danger in aiming for more than either resources, political time or the real balance of political power will actually permit.

The South African Bill envisages that the truth commission may recommend reparations for victims. Several representatives from Latin America at the Conference also urged caution about raising expectations in this regard: how substantial can material reparations be, if the number of victims is very large? If reparations are made for crimes exposed by the truth commission but not for wrongdoing that falls outside its mandate, will this risk causing fresh resentments? Will symbolic reparations, like monuments or museums or gardens of remembrance, be enough? The Chilean President wrote personally to the families of every “disappeared” person identified by the Truth Commission, together with a copy of the Commission’s findings in which he or she was named. This might sound like meagre satisfaction, yet Albie Sachs, himself disabled by a letter-bomb and the ANC’s prime mover in trying to get a truth commission established, sincerely described it as a “very beautiful” action.

In South Africa it is already agreed that there will be an amnesty for all those who acknowledge their part in crimes exposed by the Commission, however this is to be interpreted. Not apparently envisaged in South Africa, however, are disqualifications. The Conference agreed that blanket disqualifications (e.g. all security policemen being banned from public employment) are inconsistent with the rule of law, which it is a prime objective to uphold. But participants did raise the question of how far it is politically, let alone ethically, “safe” to leave torturers or death squad members in, for example, the security apparatus. Ideally there should at least be a

due-process review of the record of each individual about his or her suitability for particular kinds of further employment. But how far this is politically practicable is always another story.

At every turn, of course, the realities of power are critical. The truth commission-plus-amnesty formula reflects the overall reality of the balance of power during the negotiations for the transition to democracy. The situation does not permit justice to be done and the guilty to be punished; but nor does it permit that nothing be done, that crimes remain secret and unacknowledged. On the one hand, the National Party is in the government and the old civil service, army, police and security service remain in place. On the other hand, the mass of the population, whose economic aspirations are mostly going to be realized very slowly, if at all, cannot be expected to accept that even the crimes secretly committed against them in the past are to be treated by those responsible as though they had never happened. So the critical question is, presumably, how far the representatives of white South Africa who want to preserve stability can be induced to go. Will they use their authority to make those responsible for the torture and murder of detainees, the pseudo-Inkatha and pseudo-ANC agents provocateurs killers and the assassination squads accept responsibility.

The police rank and file understandably do not intend to take the rap for those higher up. They want an amnesty to protect them from prosecution, but no publication of the names of those amnestied. Instead, they want a general acceptance by the politicians of responsibility for all the crimes: hence their threat to expose “senior figures.” On the other hand, if no one directly involved is named, even in the most general terms, will victims, and the population at large, feel that any serious acknowledgement has been made for which forgiveness can then



Orde Eliason - LINK - Impact Visuals

be given, and an amnesty justified? It is also pertinent that the senior ANC leadership is caught up with so many other urgent and difficult questions (it is significant that the election already kept most of them away from the Conference) and that some ANC leaders may prefer that the ANC's own abuses which it has (to its great credit and in sharp contrast to the NP) already acknowledged, are now forgotten - abuses that, however small-scale by comparison, will also be looked at again by the truth commission.

At the Conference Wilmut James (who has since become the executive director of IDASA) was frankly concerned that given a divided government, and one with interests to protect, "the idea of dealing with South Africa's past may not be feasible" (p. 135). Others were less pessimistic, but speculated about second-best alternatives to state action, such as El Salvador's truth commission of three foreigners. Given the obstacles still to be overcome in establishing a truth commission in South Africa, various non-state initiatives are no doubt also be-

ing contemplated by some of those concerned. And it may be appropriate, in conclusion, to remember the continuing responsibility of historians in this matter. What Dimitrina Petrova had to say about the failure to preserve intact the files of the security police after the (confused and incomplete) change of regime in Bulgaria is relevant here:

But what is it that we have lost? The grand narrative is not lost because it can be reconstructed; the individual stories may or may not be lost ... I believe that the past can still be reconstructed in Bulgaria. (p. 79)

A reconstruction of the past by historians cannot be a substitute for a strong truth commission with the power to subpoena witnesses, secure reparation for the injured and extract acknowledgement from the guilty in exchange for an amnesty. Yet historians could, in the last resort, at least help perform the primary task of exposing all the crimes that were kept secret and denied. By now, thanks to the Goldstone Commission, var-

ious trials and the admissions of numerous security personnel and former policemen and soldiers, much of what really happened to thousands of South Africans is no longer a mystery: hundreds of particular incidents have already been written up, however incompletely, and we already know the essentials about how the state security services worked. It would be harder for an independent team of private researchers than for a truth commission to document systematically the history of crimes against human rights in South Africa, together with detailed accounts of a considerable range of individual cases, but it would not be impossible. Acknowledgement, reparation and justice would no doubt follow only in exceptional cases. But at least it would be a significant step towards ensuring that, as Lawrence Weschler, writing about Latin America, puts it, "facts [are] established, and the actual history [is] inscribed in the common memory" (p. 174), something which this remarkable and excellently edited collection of documents shows to be of real importance in itself.

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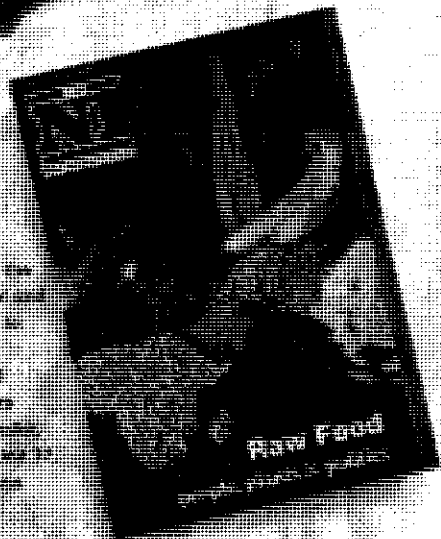
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