

# Southern Africa REPORT

Vol. 9 No. 3

January 1994

## Peasants and Politics

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### The Rural Challenge

Henry Bernstein  
and  
Michelle Friedman  
ON  
South Africa

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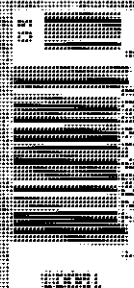
Zimbabwe  
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Victoria Britain  
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The Angola Question

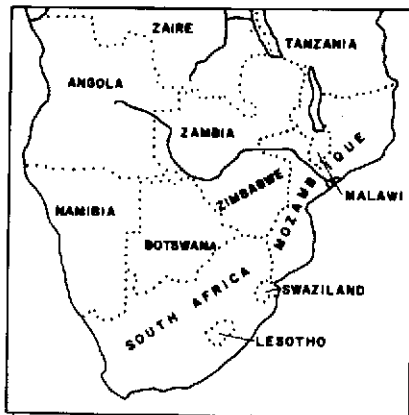
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## Southern Africa REPORT

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*Cover - This South African child works in a sugar plantation for \$2 per day*

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## Peasants and Politics

With so much attention in southern Africa recently focused on events like the granting of Peace Prizes and the outcomes of various processes of formal negotiations, it is easy to forget that the region remains

primarily a *rural* one. And just where are the peasants while all this urban politicking is going on? The present issue of *SAR* seeks to supply some answers to this question.

Pride of place attaches to South

Africa here, with two articles that draw rural questions firmly forward onto the agenda for discussion. Henry Bernstein's lead article is a magisterial overview of the issues - "the land question," "the agrarian

question" – that will challenge policy makers in the post-apartheid period, while Michelle Friedman's contribution, far more than a footnote to Bernstein, shows the crucial ways in which rural questions intersect with issues of gender inequality. Interestingly both articles, while delineating the practical, even technical, matters that are so central to considering agricultural production and to ensuring rural livelihoods, are drawn, in the end, towards discussion of the necessity of political – rather than merely technocratic – solutions. Without empowerment of the rural dwellers themselves – and, notably, of rural women – neither humane nor productive outcomes are likely in the desolated areas, peri-urban and beyond, that lie outside South Africa's cities.

Politics is also seen to be of the essence in other articles in the current issue, articles that focus on questions of rural development elsewhere in the region. In the case of Stoneman and Thompson's snapshot of the troubled issue of food security in Zimbabwe it is the politics of imperial dictate, via the World Bank and other powerful global actors, that frames the problem. For Tapscott it is the ebb and flow of internal Namibian politics – around questions of emergent class interests and diverse ethnic calculations – that stalls the process of land reform. And in Mozambique, Otto Roesch tells us, the collapse of earlier agricultural endeavours – under the weight of both government miscalculation and externally-sponsored destabilization – has most often unleashed forces, expressing novel class interests and recrudescent traditional power centres, that promise the very opposite of popular empowerment.

\* \* \*

How, then, are peasants to become a more active and positive presence within the broader political processes that affect their lives? Roesch sees some hope in the peasant cooperatives that are emerging, at least

here and there, in the Mozambican countryside. Similarly, as regards the South African situation, Friedman turns for inspiration to Mam'Lydia and the Transvaal Rural Action Committee while Bernstein sketches more broadly the possible bases for the progressive endeavours of rural dwellers. But why, Bernstein asks, is the ANC not doing more to connect with the potential agents for popularly-rooted "structural reform" that he identifies as existing in the rural areas?

This question becomes part of a much larger issue, of course, one that will inevitably see its way into the pages of *SAR* throughout the coming year. For this is the year of democracy in South Africa, and all signposts point expectantly towards April 27, ... and beyond. An achieved democratic election in South Africa will be no small accomplishment. Indeed, just how grim the future can be when such a thing proves impossible is amply demonstrated by Victoria Brittain's sad account, in this issue, of the current moment in Angola. But what also seems clear is that there is more than one brand of "democracy" and that the nature of the democratization process that takes place in the coming months in South Africa will determine just how empowered the dispossessed of South Africa, rural and urban, actually find themselves to be as they enter the "post-apartheid period."

Democracy? There is, for example, a liberal version, one described by political theorist Philip Green as being merely "representative government, ultimately accountable to 'the people,' but not really under their control, combined with a fundamentally capitalist economy." In many western countries, the almost exclusive focus on elections and parliaments that this system highlights serves merely to domesticate and demobilize any deeply-rooted and highly self-conscious popular politics and tends to remain viable so long

as, materially, the system manages to satisfy most people's minimum needs.

Needless to say, this kind of system is noticeably vulnerable to authoritarian overthrow or interneine collapse in the more impoverished parts of the world. Moreover, the depoliticization of democracy that it encourages tends to be achieved at the expense of what Tanzanian writer Issa Shivji has termed "popular democracy" – defined by him as an ideology and a process of ongoing, bottom-up resistance to inequality and established privilege, world-wide and local. What is likely to be the import of the ANC's recent achievements in this respect? As it happens, recent democratic developments have been read by different observers in diametrically opposite ways.

Thus, some see the ANC engaged in a kind of "elite-pacting" with their opposite numbers – in the National Party, the World Bank, and the like – to produce merely more continuity than change in South Africa's established socio-economic structure. Others see the movement as judiciously consolidating, through negotiations, the political and constitutional ground upon which it can then – with its allies (the trade unions, the civics, the women's organizations) – spearhead more vigorously the cause of an even more fundamental transformation of South Africa.

We will keep these different possibilities in mind as we continue to chart the democratization of South Africa – and, indeed, of southern Africa more generally – in future issues of *SAR*. Here it is necessary only to echo the core argument of analyses like those by Bernstein and Friedman in the current issue: that the process of rural transformation (like the process of transformation in so many other spheres) must be about empowerment – about "popular democracy" – if it is to have any real resonance at all.

# The Rural Challenge: The ANC and the Countryside

BY HENRY BERNSTEIN

*Henry Bernstein teaches at the University of Manchester, UK. An editor of The Journal of Peasant Studies, he writes widely on the political economy of development and agrarian change, and is currently researching the maize industry and its restructuring in South Africa.*

The control of land is a central thread throughout the history of white domination in South Africa, and remains one of its principal foundations. White control of land was key to the coercive formation of a black working class under conditions of extreme national oppression as well as capitalist exploitation. This is widely recognized, but analyzing and acting on the legacies of this long history are not so straightforward.

How might an ANC government be expected to deal with questions of land and farming? The ANC needs to concentrate its attention on agrarian reforms much more effectively than it has to date, under conditions few had anticipated before 1990.

## Land questions

The ownership, distribution and social organization of the uses of land are at the core of agrarian questions everywhere, but in South Africa land questions extend beyond agriculture and its possible transformations. Struggles over land are as central to the history and future of the cities as of the countryside. The inability of the state, despite all the measures of repression it employed, to regulate black urban migration and residence, and to defeat urban resistance, is probably the most fundamental element in the historic failure of apartheid. Apart from any effect that the repeal of pass laws

and other measures of 'influx control' might have, massive urban migration today reflects chronic economic recession and extensive rural poverty, exacerbated (but not created) by the most recent severe drought of 1991-92.

Struggles for the city, then, constitute one distinctive arena of struggle for land questions; the other major terrains of apartheid geography are the 'white' countryside mapped by the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, and the bantustans shaped by apartheid over the last 45 years. Here, land questions link more directly to agrarian questions of restructuring relations of property and production in farming.

## White agriculture at the end of apartheid

About 86% of land is under white ownership. Some 60,000 or so white farmers occupy nearly 86 million hectares, of which 10.6m ha are under crops. In recent decades, white farming has undergone both an increasing concentration of capital and an accumulation crisis (stagnating or declining capital stock). These are the effects of generalized economic recession, low levels of profitability and liquidity, increasing debt, and a gradual (if by no means complete) erosion of government financial support, accompanied by creeping deregulation and market liberalization. These trends do not apply equally to all branches of farming, but are particularly marked in the extensive grain and livestock areas of the Orange Free State (OFS) and Transvaal highveld.

White farmers were a central element of the historic class bloc of the National Party (NP) and its rule

after 1948. Having already secured control over land through the Land Acts, white farmers looked to the apartheid state to secure a cheap and servile wage labour force. At the same time, they share with farmers in other capitalist countries certain features and problems, related to the regulation of farming and its markets by agribusiness (corporate capital upstream of farming in chemicals, seeds, machinery, finance, and downstream in marketing, processing and distribution). Politically, white farmers have been organized in the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) and its provincial unions, in marketing and service cooperatives (the biggest with annual turnovers of billions of rands), in commodity organizations and official marketing boards, all permeated by NP political patronage until the 1980s. Today the OFS, and especially Transvaal Agricultural Unions, are key sites of Conservative Party (CP) and other extreme Afrikaner politics.

While relations between the NP and some white farming interests are now often tense, in 1992-93 the government disbursed a drought relief package of over three billion rands, almost entirely to white farmers to cushion their escalating debt and to maintain prices in the land market. Together with the offered transfer of more than 2m ha of state land to bantustans to 'administer,' this represents part of a strategy to impede future prospects of wide-ranging land and agrarian reform. As in other areas bearing on the reproduction of existing property rights after apartheid, the de Klerk regime is trying to establish conditions and fix rules that will limit the scope of a future democratic government.





Seasonal workers in the Transvaal

### The bantustans

The bantustans have a population of roughly 14 million people in a land area equivalent to one-sixth of that occupied by white farms. About 54% of South Africa's black population lived in bantustans in 1980 compared with 40% in 1950, due to forced removals of some 3.5 million black people from the cities and 'white' countryside during that period.

It is a serious mistake to view the bantustans as 'rural,' and to confuse 'rural' and 'agricultural' in this context. An analysis of population census data for 1980 concluded that only 44% of people in the bantustans were rural, which does not mean that the majority of the other 56% were 'urban' in any recognizable sense. They are mostly concentrated in (sometimes vast) settlements that lack the basic amenities and opportunities associated with urban life. In short, such settlements are more like squatter camps characterized by extensive

poverty and unemployment. Much of the limited employment available requires daily commuting to work in 'border' factories, services and farms in 'white' South Africa.

Likewise, not all people who are 'rural' in terms of residence are able to engage in farming. Potentially arable land per person is only 0.2 hectares, and large areas are marked by severe land degradation. The value of agricultural production is only 11% of that of white commercial farming, and bantustans are heavily dependent on 'imports' to meet basic food needs.

These are the stark contours of the struggle for existence in the bantustans. However, it is as serious a mistake as those noted above to regard the people of the bantustans as an undifferentiated mass. The great majority of those who do farm are women cultivating 'sub-subsistence' plots to which, as women, they have no claim or access in their own right. They farm without benefit

of credit, extension services, and other means of support, with the primary objective of contributing to household food needs.

Otherwise, there is a limited but significant (and probably growing) number of petty commodity producers, some of them contract farmers in schemes promoted by public capital in the form of the DBSA (Development Bank of Southern Africa) and private capital, notably sugar outgrowers in KwaZulu and KaNgwane. Whether in independent or contract farming, petty commodity production is associated with male control, and with accumulation from wage remittances and/or positions within bantustan government structures (bureaucrats, chiefs, headmen, their clients and allies). Finally, there is an often cited 'guestimate' (impossible to assess) of 3,000 or so 'commercial,' i.e. capitalist, farmers among the 14 million people of the bantustans.

The ability of some to utilize remittances to invest in commodity

production in farming (and other activities) reflects the differentiation of the black working class, the growth of a black petty bourgeoisie, and the high degree of income inequality within the black population generally. Investing in farming requires access to land, in turn requiring connections with the often authoritarian and corrupt regimes of chiefs, highlighted in Govan Mbeki's early and prescient account of bantustan formation in *The Peasants' Revolt*.

The complexities of social relations in the bantustans - their ubiquitous (if not uniform) class and gender divisions, forms of patriarchal, chiefly and bureaucratic control, ambiguities of 'tradition,' and inter-generational tensions - will mark the political processes of any future agrarian reform in the 'white' countryside as well as in the bantustans themselves.

### **Agrarian questions: a political vacuum?**

The ANC Freedom Charter of 1956 declared that land should be given to those who work it, an echo of the slogan of 'land to the tiller' central to national democratic struggles elsewhere. The implication that the agrarian question is synonymous with the 'peasant question' was more plausible then than it is now. In the 1950s there were far more blacks living and working on the farms of 'white' South Africa. In addition, they had a fresher historic memory of organizing their own farming, at the same time as working for whites, through previous forms of labour tenancy and sharecropping.

The number of permanent black farmworkers today has been greatly reduced by mechanization, and those who remain are proletarians rather than 'peasants'. At the same time, there is a larger (and probably growing) casual farm labour force of seasonal and especially day labourers, many of them women and children, drawn from rural townships or 'commuting' from bantustans. In its

changing labour organization, then, commercial farming in South Africa exhibits similar tendencies to capitalist agriculture elsewhere.

While there is a long history of resistance - both overt and hidden, in both 'white' and bantustan rural areas - to apartheid policies and practices, political organization and representation of oppressed classes and groups in the countryside are almost non-existent (especially beyond the most local levels). Govan Mbeki, cited earlier, is the only major figure in his own and subsequent generations of ANC leadership to have participated in, and systematically analyzed, the struggles of rural people.

This has serious implications. In fact, at present, there is no coherent strategy for confronting agrarian questions, and their changed conditions, inherited from the final phase of apartheid. On the one hand, the new 'interim' constitution refers to restitution of land dispossessed under any racial laws going back to the 1913 Land Act. Claims for restitution will be considered by a special commission and the courts, with any expropriation of land resulting from a successful claim compensated by the state (*The Guardian*, 18/11/93). Not only is such an approach likely to lead to interminable judicial confusion and delay, but the status of land restitution could be further undermined by compromises still being negotiated on the demarcation of federal and regional powers (*The Guardian*, 30/11/93).

On the other hand, while the ANC has recently established the Land and Agricultural Policy Centre (LAPC) to help formulate its own positions in the emerging debate over agrarian reform, such debate is largely confined to 'policy formulation,' rather than developing any strategy of political mobilization and organization in the countryside. This is hardly surprising given the LAPC's reliance on 'experts' who share their vision (and their

consultancy work as well) with the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) and the World Bank.

### **The policy debate**

Despite their historic and contemporary importance, both materially and symbolically, land and agrarian questions are not priorities of the ANC leadership, nor are they points of mobilization by organised mass constituencies as industrial and urban issues are. Hence, they lack adequate political articulation and strength in the ANC's national (and regional) structures.

It is this political vacuum that has facilitated the domination of the emergent policy debate, and indeed the ANC's role in it, by other forces and agencies, notably the DBSA and the World Bank (which work closely together). The DBSA was established by the South African government in 1983 as a development bank for the bantustans, and quickly came to claim a liberal reformist stance, charted in a partial shift from financing large agricultural schemes managed by bantustan parastatals to the Farmer Support Programme aimed at small farmers.

For its part, the World Bank advocates a more comprehensive land reform programme than the ANC has so far committed itself to, with a deft combination of arguments about the greater productivity of (some) small farmers than (some) large farmers, the need to dismantle the privileges of the latter through more thoroughgoing market liberalization, and the need to avoid potential social turmoil in the countryside associated with such extreme inequality in land distribution.

In short, the World Bank aspires to wrap up the savage contradictions of South Africa in a policy package of 'efficiency and equity' familiar from elsewhere. A particular twist to the wrapping is the attack on the privileges of white farmers under apartheid in the name of market-

driven efficiency. The market is likewise to be the basis for land reform through assisted purchase of land by carefully selected 'beneficiaries'. This amounts to a policy of 'betting on the strong': such beneficiaries are most likely to be men already active in agricultural commodity production and/or with other assets and sources of capital. Their identification and selection, moreover, are held to require elaborate administrative procedures. Will the Bank's dream scenario of combined bureaucratic action and market logic be a nightmare scenario for the rural masses?

Given the weaknesses of the ANC on agrarian reform on one hand, and on the other hand the vulnerability of 'organised' (i.e. white) agriculture in South Africa without the protection of apartheid, the World Bank (with its various allies, experts, consultants and other clients) is taking a leading role in setting the 'policy' agenda. While adept at translating its familiar version of market-based reform, of 'efficiency and equity,' into the discourse of the 'new South Africa,' the World Bank's vision of resolving the agrarian questions of apartheid will not benefit the majority of the rural masses. At the same time, and of critical political importance, it seeks to pre-empt any more radical path forward that their mobilization and participation would generate.

#### Different questions, a different politics

The limits of 'policy debate' are established by its initial question of 'what is to be done?' (e.g. selective land reform, assistance to 'small farmers'), immediately linked to how it is to be done (an appropriate combination of state action and market logic). A different politics of agrarian reform starts with questions of 'who': Who formulates objectives and demands? Who mobilizes around them? Who decides strategies and outcomes? These questions raise issues of the mobilization, organization and participa-

tion of popular social forces beyond the limited options of agency offered by the state (however 'equitable') and the market (however 'efficient').

Struggles over the nature of states and of markets, and of their links, are affected by the degree and effectiveness of involvement in those struggles of popular social forces. In South Africa access to land is a preoccupation and aspiration of vast numbers of black people, especially those in the bantustans. Moreover, aspiration seems to be matched by widespread expectations that land will be available to them with the end of apartheid. This, then, is the base for constituting a mass politics around questions of land and agrarian reform.

Of course, this social base has its own contradictions and complexities, as suggested earlier. There are class contradictions (in varying forms, experienced with various degrees of acuteness) among the black population, linked in the bantustans to the structures of power wielded by chiefs and so-called 'traditional' forces. There are also 'contradictions amongst the people,' of which those derived from gender divisions and patriarchy are the most pervasive, and no doubt the most deeply entrenched. Among the complexities are the great diversity of the countryside, both socially and ecologically, and the fact that there are different kinds of aspirations to, and interests in, access to land.

First, and probably most widespread, is an aspiration to land to build a place to live or to retire to: to have a (rural) home secure from the chronic instability so many have experienced throughout the long history of dispossession (not least since 1948). Second is an aspiration to land to farm as one activity among others in livelihood strategies, whether for self-provisioning in food, for market production, or both. Third is an aspiration to land for farming as a principal occupation and source

of livelihood. In addition, there is a desire for land as a means of accumulation or speculation by some of the black petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, both rural and urban.

Ascertaining who wants land, for what purposes, and what kinds of people they are, is precisely the first step in any process of constituting and organizing social forces around land and agrarian reform. This step can only be taken by asking people, especially in the bantustans, what they think and what they want: in short by initiating campaigns on land and agrarian questions. These campaigns can be launched and tested first in those bantustans, and areas within them, where the ANC has widespread support and/or opposition to local bureaucratic and chiefly power is strong. Initial and experimental campaigns of this kind would generate a powerful demonstration effect elsewhere.

The political framework established by such campaigns would develop an agenda by soliciting and debating ideas about which land people might accept (and where), what they might need to use it productively in farming, what forms of tenure they envisage, the possibilities of some collective regulation and management of soil, water, grazing, and forest resources - and how they are prepared to negotiate these and other issues.

Such a process of popular mobilization will be 'messy.' Its progress will vary a great deal between rural areas according to their specific social and political configurations, and the quality of local and other cadres involved. It will bear the imprint of the kinds of contradictions noted, which it may reproduce as well as confront. But the essential point is that messiness and unevenness always accompany the unleashing of a social dynamic, in this case releasing the suppressed or hidden political energies of the rural masses. This dynamic has no place (by intention or otherwise) in the 'policy debate,'



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## south africa

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with its scenarios for 'equity and efficiency' neatly drawn by experts 'on behalf of' those oppressed and exploited by white domination.

It is the political dynamic itself that provides a radical and potentially transformational content to any process of land and agrarian reform, rather than the scale of its immediate gains. The latter – how much land is redistributed in the foreseeable future, the conditions of redistribution and of assistance to the development of black farming – will be constrained by both the general balance of forces, and the time it takes for the rural masses to

develop their political capacities and cohesiveness. However, the limits imposed by the balance of forces in any conjuncture of struggle are only known by pushing against those limits, and the developing capacity of popular social forces itself shifts the balance and extends the terrain of political possibility.

The perspective outlined here is not a fantasy of immediate and total ('revolutionary') transformation: it envisages individual (if not absolute) title to land and individual or household farming, not socialist property or production. It is rather an assessment of the politics

of potential 'structural reform' (as John Saul has applied the concept to South Africa) as opposed to what is otherwise on offer: a limited 'deracialization' of land and farming designed by experts, delivered by the state, and driven by the logic of the market. This path excludes the agency of those whose daily struggles for existence bear the deepest imprint of apartheid. Their energies, hopes and ideas are the most important political resource for 'structural reform' in the countryside: it is not too late for the ANC to start to connect with them.



Fernando Molerés – Impact Visuals



Abdul Shariff - Impact Visuals

## The Rural Challenge: Women and Land

BY MICHELLE FRIEDMAN

*Michelle Friedman is Gender Coordinator of the National Land Committee in South Africa.*

The past months of haggling and compromising in the multi-party negotiations process have finally yielded a transitional constitution to steer South Africans into the future. Though the Transitional Executive Council itself does not formally deal with land issues, two issues dealt with in the constitution have important implications for black women – and black people more generally – living and working on the land in the rural areas. Both issues were intensely contested and debated, and

resolved only after demonstrations and representations from organized rural communities, and much lobbying and caucusing in the negotiation forum. Their eleventh hour resolution has significantly set the principles and parameters of a land reform policy.

The first issue was the question of the restoration of land to those dispossessed by apartheid. An earlier proposed property rights clause was opposed by rural representatives as entrenching existing property rights and preventing the possibility of the new government undertaking land redistribution and restitution programmes. The positive

outcome of the negotiations on this issue means that land redistribution is now rendered possible (though its extent is by no means determined or assured). Further, the bill of rights includes a clause that guarantees restoration of land rights to those whose land was taken away under apartheid schemes.

The second issue (of more direct relevance to women) concerns the constitutional relationship between the principle of gender equality and the status of custom, traditional law and culture, aspects of which are inherently patriarchal. It is the latter which presently organizes rural women's access to land (as is de-

scribed further below). The debate on this issue was one of the most contentious in the closing days of the negotiating process. Traditional leaders were demanding the constitutional recognition of custom and traditional law, with its gender inequality unchallenged. Organized women's groups were insisting that gender equality should supersede customary law and culture in the bill of rights. In the end, the women's caucus within the multi-party negotiating forum, together with strong support from women's groups (including the Rural Women's Movement) won the day. The gender equality provision means, for rural women, the possibility of gaining independent access to land, that is, unmediated by their relationships to male kin.

Given the historic and contemporary centrality of both land dispossession and constraining patriarchal social relations to the onerous conditions of rural production and survival faced by black women in South Africa, these negotiated rights signify important – potentially momentous – victories. But the really critical challenge is posed by the translation of these abstract rights into practical, beneficial changes in the conditions of rural women's daily lives. How this could actually be expected to happen involves consideration of (i) the ways that land reform policy might address the issues faced by rural women, and (ii) the kinds of political organization amongst rural women that is necessary for them to continue pushing for gender-relevant agrarian reform.

### The issues facing rural women.

Any generalized notion of "rural women" is a fiction of course. There is no such homogenous grouping. South African rural-based women occupy and use land in a variety of different forms, and there are enormous differences between and contradictions within rural communities. Women's relationships to land are determined by a mixture

of apartheid land policy, the South African economy and the nature of their rural societies. The challenge of developing a coherent national policy to address the range of issues and diverse forms of rural production, and to do so in ways that simultaneously challenge the subordination of women, is daunting. Here, I can merely outline the general issues and dilemmas facing various groupings of rural women and land activists.

There are three key and linked themes that characterize rural women's position in relation to land. The first has to do with their lack of legitimate access to land in the form of rights. The second highlights their minimal role and access to decision-making around land. The third relates to the broader social, economic and environmental context.

Both women and men from rural and dispossessed communities share a basic need for more land with secure tenure and associated support services. However, traditionally, women were not able to have independent rights to land and were only eligible for allocation through men (either husbands or sons). So much to do with land relations is bound up in laws and practices around domestic relations, in particular those pertaining to marriage, inheritance and the like. For instance, under communal tenure systems, only married males are formally eligible for land rights. Inheritance operates through sons (usually the youngest inherits the land). A widow without children is particularly vulnerable since the land she worked will probably be taken by her parents-in-law or her late husband's brothers.

On land owned by the South African Development Trust, the law specifies that women may not be issued with certificates of occupation. On privately owned, freehold property, written wills and the form of marriage (customary or civil) determine the rights of inheritance and ownership.

In sum, lacking legal majority status, African women could not have title to land nor could they transmit such title and land rights. Their legal status also potentially excluded them from any land restitution process. In practice, transgenerational familial land rights have been transformed into rights of control by males.

The right to gender equality agreed to in the new constitution which will confer full (majority) legal capacity on African women, thus implies a profound change in their claims to land. Women should now be eligible to purchase and be allocated land.

In addition, however, decision-making structures within rural communities, whether *kgotlas* (traditional village decision-making structures) or local committees, have tended to deter women's participation – either through formal prohibitions or simple male domination. These structures, together with the chiefs, are generally responsible for the allocation of land and, in some instances, the mediation of domestic disputes as well as local development initiatives. At the level of the household, women are normally the caretakers but do not have formal control over decision-making. Married women with legal minority status have thus been unable to control the proceeds or products of the land and their own labour.

Rural women experience "development problems" differently from men in ways that go beyond their restricted access to land and exclusion from the decision-making affecting their work and lives. Customary law and the division of labour assign women particular roles in relation to such things as childcare, water and firewood collection, meaning that any development intervention or provision of agricultural support services has gender-differentiated effects. Such initiatives have tended not to take such gender differences into account, often with the effect

of exacerbating the difficult conditions faced by women rural producers. Policy organized around a neutral notion like "the rural poor" will be unlikely to consider the broader social issues or the way in which agricultural production is organized by patriarchal relations.

### Policy responses

The World Bank summary paper produced for the recent conference "Options For Land Reform and Rural Restructuring in South Africa," is presently the most comprehensive policy proposal available. As such, it warrants consideration in relation to how it addresses the implications of gender. It should be noted though, that the policy is still being debated and that more consultation about its implications at the "community" level will yield a much clearer picture of the potential benefits and constraints of the policy for women in different locations.

A central theme of the land redistribution options described in this proposal is a reliance on market forces for facilitating both the acquisition and redistribution of land. However, the existing gender and class inequities which prohibit access to the "free" market are referred to throughout the document, and the inequitable consequences of market-based reform are recognized. The World Bank policy proposes three economic mechanisms for confronting this dilemma: a grant system, a food aid system and a welfare system. For people who fall into the poorest social categories this approach offers some support but ultimately little hope for fundamental change. As it stands, the policy provides for grants primarily for housing land but wants to see future agricultural producers contributing towards a portion of the land costs.

However, as noted earlier, the situation of rural poverty cannot be transformed via a material transfer of land alone; social relationships more generally need to be altered. How far a land reform policy frame-

work can go in this regard is open to question. In relation to decision-making, the Bank document does suggest a democratically elected district level structure for development administration and the allocation of land. It also acknowledges a need for an affirmative action programme to ensure that women and the very poor will be able to participate in and benefit from district level decisions.

The actual process and procedures of policy implementation cannot really be determined by formal policy statements, however; it is at a far more practical level that the impact of what actually comes to pass for policy will be felt. For example, it is not only how land will be obtained that will impact on the lives of poor rural women, but also how support services are restructured. We are not told, for instance, how important gender inequality will be amongst the criteria by which land grants will be given. How will women's need for land be interpreted in practice? The operation of the agricultural extension system is vaguely depicted, and there are no specific mechanisms for ensuring that attention is given to women farmers. Similarly there is no specified means to ensure that the poorest rural dwellers, particularly women, have access to credit and information facilities. Without affirmative action and a very focused attempt to address the articulated needs and demands of women rural producers, land and agrarian reform is likely only to reproduce the subordinating patriarchal relations that prevail. Yet any policy directed at empowering women in the rural areas will clearly continue to be resisted by men and by chiefs.

There is another reason why policy proposals like those outlined by the World Bank, whatever their merits and limitations, can be determining of changes that occur on the ground in only the very broadest way. For the process of rural change must inevitably be a political process, first and foremost.

Given the complexity and diversity in the actual conditions of rural land dwellers and users, it is the scope and nature of locally determined development initiatives and the level and character of local organization that will be critical in shaping and effecting change for women and men.

### Rural women organizing

Many rural women participate in various forms of social organization such as burial societies, *stokvels* (collective savings clubs), church groups, community garden groups and small self-help project groups. Very few of these, however, could be seriously considered as a "politically organized social force." Yet, as Henry Bernstein has argued, (see, for example, his article in this issue) such political organization is an essential condition of any democratic agrarian reform. It is unfortunate, then, that problems like distance, lack of resources, appalling communications infrastructure and unchecked bantustan autocrats work so negatively to hinder political mobilization in rural areas. Moreover, the mobilization of women, specifically, is further inhibited by relations of male dominance and the inordinate burden of responsibility for domestic work that women carry.

Despite these constraints, the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) - based in the Transvaal with an affiliation of forty-one women's groups and supported by the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) - has emerged in South Africa to play a unique role. Since the RWM is currently the only constituency-based rural organization that formally takes up issues of land, gender and development at both local and national levels, it is worth looking at closely here.

The RWM has its origins in 1986, in a one-off regional meeting organized by Mam'Lydia Kompe (see box). Women's groups from nine communities that were resisting forced removals came together to talk about their problems. The

resolutions taken at this meeting reflected general community concerns: an end to all forced removals; an end to the stealing of citizenship right; help for all victims of forced removal; and an end to detentions and police harassment.

The RWM was formally constituted in 1991. Its current aims reveal an expansion of the women's concerns to include issues relevant to a just land reform policy, the adequate development of rural areas and a more fundamental challenging of patriarchal social and political relations and the status of women. The translation of these aims into demands for inclusion in the Women's Charter (see *SAR* 9 no. 2, November 1993 p.9) indicate a keen awareness of the linkages between land, power, resources and social position. The women understand quite clearly that land reform without corresponding social reform will be highly unsatisfactory. For instance, specific demands pertinent to land reform include land rights for women whether they are unmarried or married; the registration of land in women's names; the right for women to farm and produce their own food crops; and access to land for grazing and cattle posts. Further demands are that women be allowed to make decisions about livestock and be part of *kgotlas*, local, regional and national government structures. Demands for development needs around health and fertility control, water and creches are integrated with demands for land and an end to the bantustan system. A favourite RWM slogan is "one

woman - one man; one husband - one wife" articulating a radical contestation of the existing polygamous norm.

It is primarily through its links with TRAC and the National Land Committee (NLC) that the RWM has been able to publicize itself, articulate its demands and enter the national political arena. As mentioned above, the RWM was vociferously involved in arguing against the constitutional entrenchment of patriarchal traditions. TRAC is one of the affiliates of the NLC, a network of nine land service organizations that are committed to the promotion of social justice in South Africa in relation to access to and control over land and related resources. While many other NGOs work in rural areas and are concerned with various aspects of rural development, the NLC is one of the few national non-party-political organizations addressing issues of social justice in relation to land in particular.

So, while the RWM is not the only organization mobilizing rural women, it is the most publicly vocal. Although other NLC affiliates are also providing a support role to women's groups within their regions, there are at present no other broad-based regional groupings constituting themselves as a "woman's voice" or a "woman's social-political force." In fact it was the experience of TRAC and the RWM that stimulated and catalyzed the NLC, as a national body, to recognize more seriously the particularly disadvantaged position of women living in ru-

ral areas. To this end, nearly two years ago, the NLC embarked on a process of making all aspects of its work in relation to land reform gender-sensitive.

There are enormous gaps in knowledge about the diverse and complex range of gendered social and production relations that obtain in the rural areas. Far more research is needed in order to flesh out the details of a land reform policy that can practically address the glaring inequities. Land is one of the foci of the research being conducted by the Women's National Coalition towards gathering demands for the Women's Charter. The NLC has also embarked upon a national research programme with a view to gathering and consolidating information about women's access to land resources and priorities for land use in a wide variety of settlement types and tenure conditions. In addition, the NLC is presently busy planning a massive community land conference for early February, 1994. Approximately 1,000 delegates from rural areas all over the country will be attending to present their "demands around land."

We must hope that women from different different rural communities will be there in full force, calling attention to their pressing and urgent issues. For it is in the ongoing political efforts of people like Mam'Lydia and of organizations like the Rural Women's Movement that the best prospects lie for a policy of rural transformation that is truly gender-sensitive.

## Mam'Lydia

*As early as 1986 TRAC employed Mam'Lydia Kompe as a fieldworker. Mam'Lydia brought with her a particular range of skills and experience that influenced her work with communities resisting removals and incorporation in the bantustans during the eighties. For one thing, she identified strongly with rural people and their problems having retained distinct links with the rural village of her birth: "When I talk about rural women I do not talk in isolation from myself. I have got my own rural home in a rural area. Here [in the city] I am working as a migrant. At the end of the day my life will be spent in my village where my house is, not where I rent" (Kompe, in Land Update, 1992:6).*

*Mam'Lydia had however also spent a considerable number of years working as a trade union organiser, where she developed her formidable political strategizing abilities. There she learnt a particular style of organising and the meaning of praxis. At a time when it was not yet popular, Mam'Lydia was one of the initiators of the FOSATU women's groups. Like so many other married women who begin exploring independent lives for themselves outside of the immediate family context, Mam'Lydia has experienced a number of painful personal struggles catalyzed by her political choices. When she joined TRAC, therefore, her personal-political experiences and vision were bound to impact upon the direction of her work.*

# Land Reform in Namibia

## Why Not?

BY CHRIS TAPSCOTT

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From the time of German occupation, land theft has been a central issue in the struggle for national self-determination in Namibia. So it is not surprising that, with the onset of independence, the land question has ranked high on the political agenda.

Dispossession of the indigenous people had been a feature of colonial rule and, at independence, some 45% of the total land area and 74% of the potentially arable land was owned by less than 4,100 people, mainly white, commercial farmers who comprised less than 0.2% of the total population. With the advent of independence, expectations of some form of redistribution were thus widespread, and although SWAPO never proposed full-scale nationalization of land in its 1989 election manifesto, it did commit itself to "transfer some of the land from the few with too much of it to the landless majority." However, nearly four years after the departure of South African colonial forces, no significant steps have been taken towards the formulation, let alone implementation, of a program of land reform in Namibia.

With the indigenous population mostly relegated to the ethnic reserves in the north (and to a much lesser extent in the south), much of the central plateau remains solidly white-owned. Depicted as a swath of green on official maps of Namibia, this "footprint" of colonialism serves as a constant reminder of the inequities of the past and of the fact that the policy of national reconciliation, while a cornerstone of

the peace process, has done much to entrench the status quo. Given the fact that the land question remains largely unresolved, serious questions are being asked about the SWAPO government's commitment to land reform and of its political will to challenge the vested interests of a small elite.

### Present land policies

In June 1991, a national Lands Conference was held to discuss the land question. The conference, broadly representative in its attendance, reached a measure of consensus on the issue of redistribution. These included the resolutions that any redistribution would be on a compensatory "willing seller/willing buyer" basis, and, significantly, that there could be no recognition of ancestral land claims. The conference, however, was purely consultative in nature. Beyond the establishment of a number of guiding principles, it provided no mandate for future action. In hindsight, the consultative process acted as a public relations exercise to defuse the immediate clamour for reform and to buy time for the government to consolidate its rule.

Since then, the government has taken some steps to purchase farms to resettle farmers from the communal areas. But the program has been far from comprehensive and its impact has been minimal. This is partly due to the fact that some of the farms offered for sale to the government are in marginal agricultural areas and partly to the fact that few black Namibians have been willing or able to buy farms at commercial rates (favourable loan conditions notwithstanding). Following the recommendations of a technical

committee on commercial farming, the Cabinet is also set to pass some land reform legislation in early 1994. The criteria being used to determine which land should be appropriated for redistribution include absentee ownership, the underutilization and undercapitalization of land, and the multiple ownership of farms.

Some seven million hectares of land (roughly 10% of suitable farming land) have been identified under these criteria, but the process of redistribution is likely to face a number of constraints over and above those pertaining to the quality of agricultural land made available. In the first instance, the farms identified are scattered throughout the country and this is likely to limit the options for land reform. It will, for example, limit the prospects for extending existing communal areas. In the second instance, following the dictates of the policy of willing seller/willing buyer, the state, which is already suffering fiscal pressures, must find the resources to expropriate the land at market-related prices. As a consequence, the land reform, which is likely to ensue from this redistribution, is likely to benefit a relatively small proportion of the population.

In defending the slow pace of reform, government officials point to the poor endowment of the country as a limiting factor in the reform process. Despite its size, a significant part of Namibia is desert or semi-desert, and ecological conditions in general are harsh. With the exception of certain regions, neither the climate nor the soils are favourable for arable agriculture on any scale. In much of the south and west of





Paul Weinberg - Afrapix/Impact Visuals

the country, the extensive and expensive nature of farming in many commercial farming areas renders them unsuitable in their present form for small scale farming (ten hectares are needed for each head of livestock in certain areas, plus investment in water infrastructure and fence maintenance). In this context, the mere redistribution of land is not likely in itself to resolve the problem of landlessness in Namibia.

Moving small scale subsistence farmers from overcrowded and agriculturally marginal areas in the north to the arid south, ultimately could place them in an even more disadvantaged situation. It is also certain that, for the majority of small scale farmers in the north, access to inputs (credit, extension services, markets, etc.) which could facilitate more intensive utilization of their arable land is a far more pressing issue than the need for more arable land. However, these constraints alone are an insufficient explanation for the government's inaction on the land issue. Other reasons must be sought.

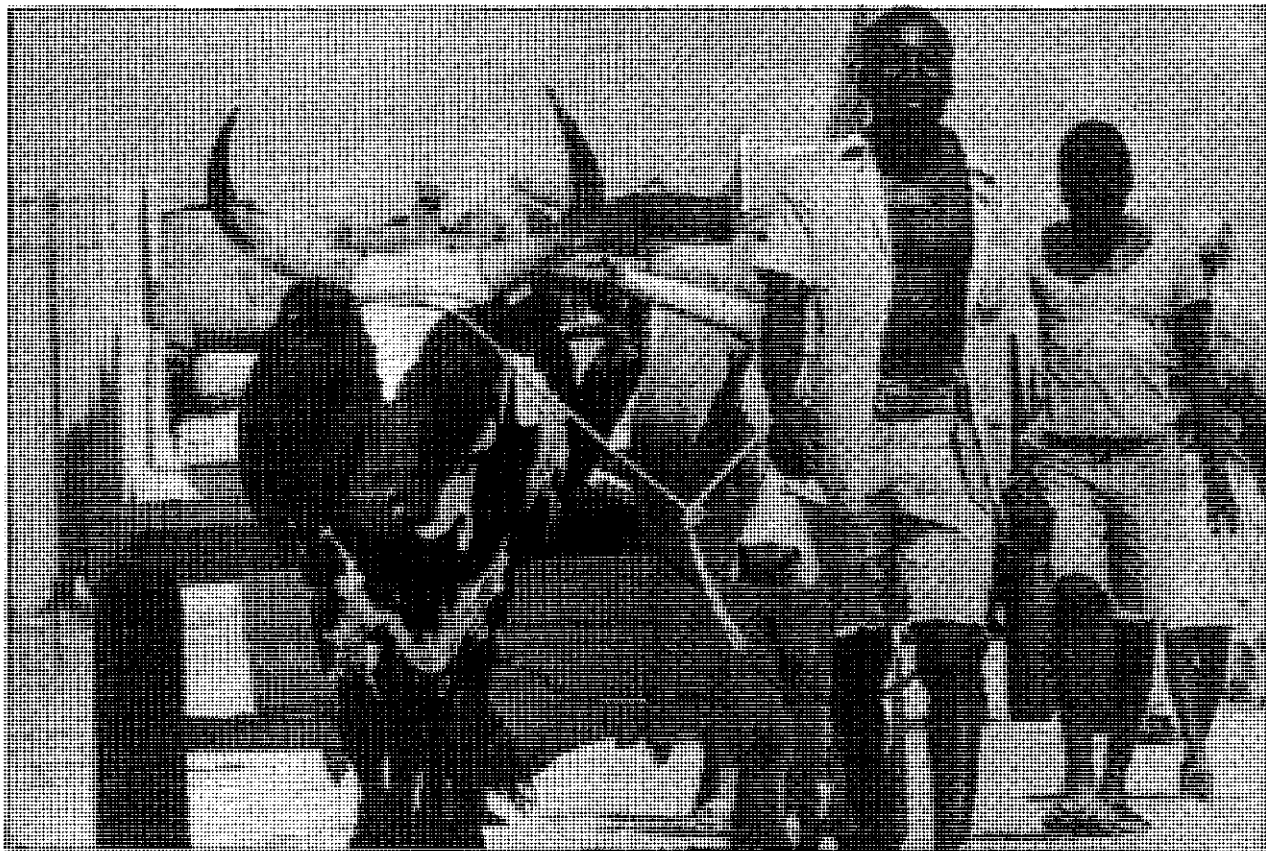
### Land is not the question

The lack of urgency in addressing land issues in Namibia leads to the controversial conclusion that, election rhetoric aside, land reform is not a top priority for the SWAPO government at present. Heretical as this perspective might be within party circles, it is, nevertheless, historically grounded. Dispossession of the indigenous population commenced under German rule, when the ethnic groups inhabiting the central Namibian plateau (principally the Herero, Nama, Damara and San) were forcefully expelled to make way for colonial settlers. Ethnic groups to the north were contained in their southerly movement by a cordon of forts that guarded the perimeters of the settler zone. However, while their traditional boundaries were pushed back to an extent, they did not suffer land theft to any significant degree. Unlike their counterparts to the south, ethnic groups in the north, which comprise two thirds of the national population, are not in a position to point to land currently occupied by white com-

mercial farmers and lay claim to it on ancestral grounds.

Although access to land remains an important factor in the north, the issue lacks the emotive force and political urgency found in communities further south. At the same time, while SWAPO cannot be accused of being ethnically biased (it actively recruits among all ethnic groups), it remains a fact, on the evidence of the national election of 1989 and the regional elections of 1992, that the party draws the bulk of its political support from the north, and predominantly from the former Owambo region. In this context, there is at present no groundswell of pressure on the government to effect sweeping changes to existing patterns of land ownership.

This state of affairs is exacerbated by the fact that there is a growing trend among certain farmers in the former Owambo and Kavango regions to fence rangelands, hitherto recognized as communal pasture, for private use. Under this practice, private farms (often sev-



Afrapix/Impact Visuals

eral thousand hectares in size) are acquired from the local traditional leaders for a small fee, which seldom exceeds one or two thousand Namibian dollars. Not only is this practice disrupting age-old patterns of transhumance in the region, confining seasonal grazing into ever-smaller areas with the concomitant danger of environmental degradation, but it is also relieving pressure on the government to reallocate land in the commercial farming areas. This is because those who are enclosing land comprise a powerful alliance of senior traditional leaders, the local business elite and senior political figures, including some members of the Cabinet. Without the support of this group, calls for land reform from the north are largely muted.

Although the government has indicated that it will take action against this enclosure, there is little likelihood that it will do so. In the first instance, those

acquiring private farms are not, strictly speaking, breaking any laws, since unrepealed legislation carried over from the colonial era permits traditional leaders to allocate land at their discretion. In the second instance, it is unlikely to seek a confrontation with such a powerful group of its own supporters. Under these circumstances, the most that might be expected will be a moratorium on all future enclosures of communal land. The practice, nevertheless, is also undermining the government's own efforts to encourage wealthier farmers to leave the communal areas and settle in the commercial farming areas. Since the acquisition of land in the commercial areas in on market-related terms, there is little, if any, incentive for such farmers to move.

At the same time, the process of enclosure runs the risk of accelerating social differentiation within the commercial areas. Farmers who

enclose communal rangeland typically graze their stock on the commons and only move them back to their private reserves once this is depleted. Under drought conditions, such as those that occurred in 1991/92, small subsistence farmers who lack the means to fence land suffered higher stock losses than those who had access to private grazing. A progressive decline in assets, in turn, is leading to increasing pressure to move off the land among those who are economically mobile.

At present, the groups most vocal in their claims for restitution of land are those who were forcibly dispossessed of their land during different phases of colonial rule. Unlike communities in the north that practice mixed livestock and grain farming, these farmers in the centre and south of the country are predominantly pastoralists whose immediate need is for additional grazing for overgrazed communal



# The Politics of the Aftermath

## Peasant Options in Mozambique

BY OTTO ROESCH

*Otto Roesch is a member of the SAR editorial working group and teaches in the Department of Anthropology at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario.*

For the second time since national independence in 1975, Mozambican rural society is undergoing a far-reaching process of political and economic reorganization. This process of change, which has its basis in the failures of Frelimo's socialist experiment and in the disruptive effects of war and external destabilization, derives much of its current impetus from the country's shift to a market economy and a pluralistic political system during the late 1980s. The recent signing of a peace accord between the government and Renamo (in October, 1992) has further accelerated the pace of change, as increasing numbers of war-displaced people (estimated to number 5.8 million) begin returning to their homes to rebuild their war-shattered lives and communities. The kind of rural society that is emerging from this process, however, is politically and developmentally fraught, and while continuous with the past, bears little resemblance to the *ante-bellum* socialist order that Frelimo sought to construct during the first decade of independence.

After fifteen years of war that has shattered the fabric of Mozambican rural society, and after seven years of market-oriented reforms under the auspices of an IMF-approved structural adjustment programme adopted by the Mozambican government in 1987, little remains of Frelimo's early socialist experiment in rural development. Centering on the establishment of communal villages, universal health care and education, and on the collectiviza-

tion of peasant production on state farms and cooperatives, Frelimo's early attempt to achieve a rapid socialist transformation of the inherited colonial order has left an uneven and often tenuous institutional legacy in the rural areas of the country. Though communal villages have remained part of Mozambican territorial organization in many parts of the country, and though the institutions of political administration have endured in those rural areas which remained under government control during the war, little else of an institutional character remains from this period. State farms, cooperatives, schools, the rural health network, and other aspects of the collective institutional framework that Frelimo sought to establish in the countryside during the first decade of independence have all succumbed, to varying degrees, either to the war or changing policy orientations.

Though the end of the war is allowing people to return to their homes and permitting many formerly isolated areas to be reintegrated into the economic and political life of the country, the obstacles to reconstruction and development are many. Large tracts of Mozambican countryside remain cut off from the national economy because of destroyed roads and bridges, lack of transport, or Renamo objections to economic intercourse between the areas it controls and the national economy. Most rural Mozambicans, moreover, have had their productive capacities severely crippled by the war. People have been displaced from their lands, had their homes and possessions destroyed, draught animals and other live-stock stolen, and family members killed. As a result, the productive output of most rural households is quite limited and

destined primarily for domestic consumption.

### The failure of structural adjustment

Mozambique's structural adjustment programme, which had as one of its specific objectives the expansion of marketed production by peasant producers, has done little to foster rural reconstruction. State supplied inputs, along with marketing and extension services, have all been drastically reduced as a result of IMF-imposed austerity measures; and market forces, which the programme was supposed to unleash, have proved singularly incapable of providing these inputs and services in the quantities required, or at prices that peasants can afford. Though farm gate prices have increased, they have not done so in proportion to the dramatically increased prices for consumer goods and agricultural inputs, effectively depriving peasant producers of both the means and the incentive to expand agricultural production. Not surprisingly, the latest economic statistics for 1992 show a continuing decline in agricultural output.

Mozambique's structural adjustment programme, in fact, has not lived up to its advance billing. After seven years of operation, the programme has not succeeded in fostering any significant or sustainable level of economic growth, or improvement in the living standard of the bulk of the population. Though the large infusions of Western credit that accompanied the launching of the structural adjustment programme initially boosted agricultural and industrial production and exports, economic growth has since stalled. GDP, for example, has declined steadily over the past three years. On a per capita basis

## mozambique

it currently stands at only one fifth of what it was, in 1986, the year before Mozambique adopted the programme (i.e. Mozambique's last year as a centrally planned economy). Mozambique's industrial sector has been all but destroyed by the liberalized trade provisions of the programme, which have allowed cheap foreign (mostly South African) imports to flood into the domestic market. And because of the large sums of money needed to finance the programme, Mozambique's foreign debt has increased massively since the adoption of structural adjustment.

At the social level, structural adjustment has meant the collapse of the once impressive systems of health care and free schooling in the rural areas. Since many rural health centres and schools have been destroyed by the war, and since government funds for social spending have been drastically reduced under

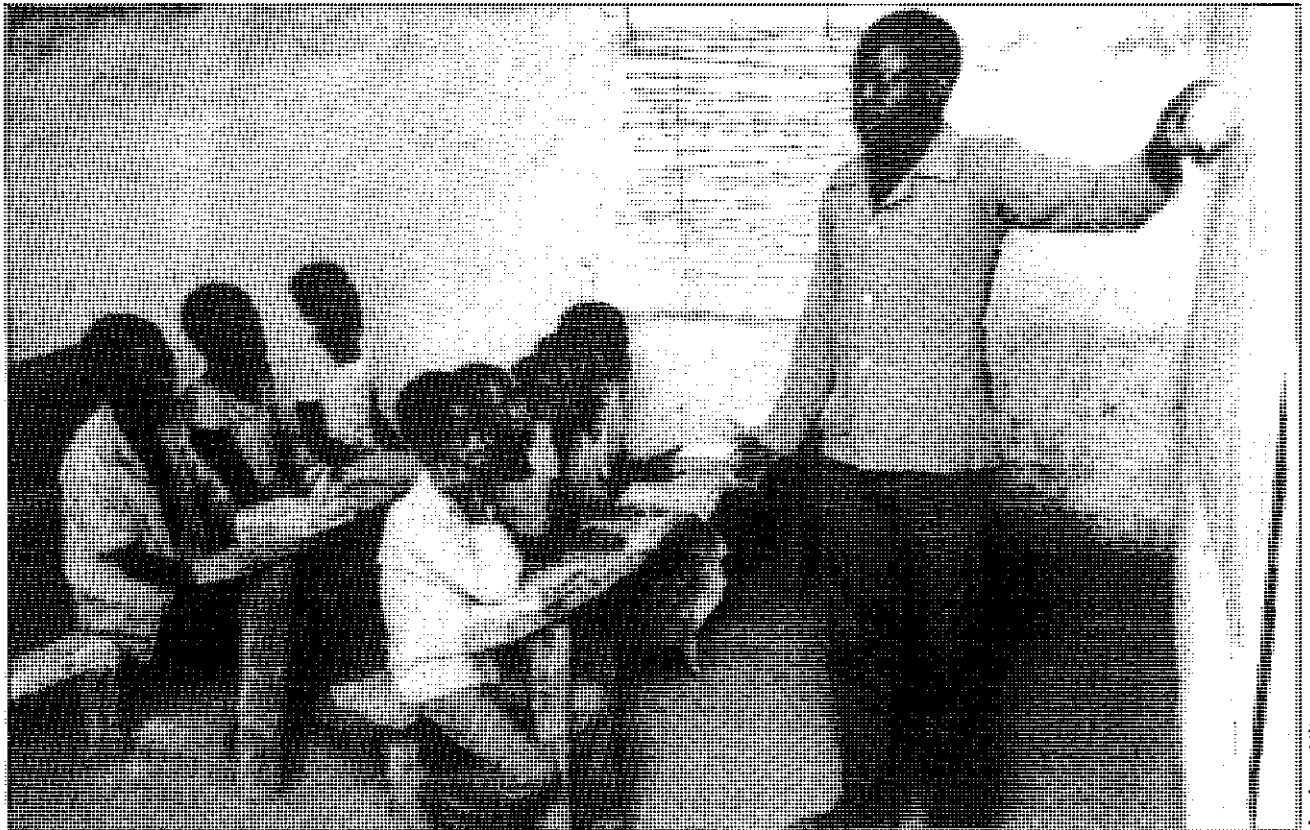
structural adjustment, the whole educational and health care network that once existed in the rural areas has largely disappeared. Health care in many areas has been taken over by foreign NGOs and religious orders. In most areas people are now forced to rely almost exclusively on traditional healers for their health problems. The collapse of the educational system has meant that virtually all of those that are fortunate enough to attend elementary school in the rural areas have little prospect of continuing their education beyond the elementary level. The crisis of the educational system has fostered both marginality among rural youth and the tide of rural-urban migration.

The economic and social crises precipitated by war and structural adjustment have been particularly hard on women. Given women's central productive and reproductive roles in Mozambican society, as

food producers and care givers to children, the sick and the aged, the economic hardships of declining levels of consumption and cuts in social spending have meant that women are being forced to work longer and harder in order to feed their families, and having to shoulder more of the social costs of nurturing, educating and nursing - costs that were formerly shared, at least in part, with public institutions. These increased pressures on women's labour time have relegated women ever more firmly to their traditional roles in the domestic sphere. The important gains made by rural women under Frelimo's affirmative action policies during the first decade of independence are now in danger of being completely reversed.

### **Increasing inequalities and class conflict**

Economic liberalization under struc-



Anders Nilsson - AIM

*"Structural adjustment has meant collapse of once impressive free schooling in rural areas" A rural primary school*

tural adjustment has also fostered a dramatic process of differentiation in both urban and rural areas. This process has centered on the ability of a small commercial and politically connected elite to enrich itself at a time when the bulk of the population struggles to survive. Since the adoption of structural adjustment, in fact, living standards have declined dramatically for the majority of the population, while official corruption and business illegalities have flourished. Wage levels in urban centres have not kept up with price increases and, as previously noted, terms of trade continue to favour manufacturing over agriculture. And since most capital and consumer goods are imported, the current price structure favours domestic and foreign importers, and domestic merchant capital generally. Given the historic aversion of Mozambican merchant capital to invest in production, most of the profits currently being made in commerce are either exported or consumed in conspicuous consumption.

Declining standards of living for the majority, and increased affluence for the political and economic elite, have fueled a growing tide of popular discontent that has led to a sharp increase in criminality, and to outbreaks of protest and rioting, especially in urban areas. In the rural areas, the focus of class conflict has been land. Peasant producers, especially those located on prime agricultural lands close to urban centres and main roads, have found their land tenure increasingly under threat by politically connected private interests, be these domestic or foreign. Many of the foreign private interests are white South African and Zimbabwean farmers who are keen to take advantage of the lower labour and land costs in Mozambique. Others are the so-called "retornados": Portuguese colonial settlers who left the country at independence and who are now returning to reclaim their abandoned lands.



Workers protest low wages on May Day, Maputo, 1991

Alfredo Mueche - AIM

The willingness of government officials to (legally or illegally) grant local elites and foreign business interests titles to lands that are already occupied by peasant farmers is increasingly putting the state and private capital on a collision course with the peasantry.

**Political pluralism and civil society**

The legacy of the war, the shift to the market, and the adoption of a multi-party political system have also had a profound impact on political and ideological life in the rural areas. This impact is evident



not only in the presence of new political parties in the countryside, but also in the rapid growth of civil society and in the new found power of traditional chiefs.

Though Frelimo and, to a lesser extent, Renamo may be the only two political parties with any significant bases of popular support in the rural areas, some of the small, new political parties are attempting to extend outwards into the countryside from their urban bases in preparation for next year's national elections. Such attempts, of course, are limited to areas controlled by the government, since Renamo continues to refuse other political parties, or even government officials, access to the areas it controls. On the basis of the available evidence, these smaller parties would appear to enjoy only very limited, and often regionalistic, bases of support.

A far more significant political force in the rural areas is a diffuse neo-traditionalist movement committed to the political rehabilitation of traditional chiefs and to a return to some form of chiefly political and religious leadership at the local level. Strongest in the centre and north of the country, this resurgent neo-traditionalism is ideologically rooted in a popular belief, relatively widespread, that Mozambique's post-independence political and economic crisis is the result of Frelimo's deposition of chiefs after independence, and Frelimo's attendant repression of those religious ceremonies which in the past were believed to ensure agricultural abundance and community well-being. In terms of the "logic" of this mystification of the country's post-independence crisis, the banning of such ceremonies - in which chiefs played a central role and which tended to legitimate chiefly political authority - is deemed to have angered the ancestral spirits and led them to withdraw their support and protection from the living, thus bringing about the current hardship and suffering.

Cognizant of Renamo's past success in instrumentalizing this kind of ideological discourse in order to win increased popular support, and of the *de facto* authority that chiefs still command in many rural areas, the government has been engaged in an ongoing fence-mending exercise over the past few years in an attempt to reach a new political *modus vivendi* with traditional political and religious authorities. This attempt at reconciliation has gained added importance in view of the upcoming elections, since chiefs can be expected to play an important role in influencing how their traditionalist followings might vote. Already in many rural areas under government control, chiefs now function in an advisory capacity to the elected local councils which replaced them after independence. Chiefs, of course, have always been the basis of Renamo's administrative presence in the areas it controls, but the legacy of past Renamo violence and abuses against the civilian population has alienated much of the initial support which Renamo enjoyed, greatly facilitating the government's fence-mending efforts in this regard. Though the national debate on the precise role to be granted chiefs in a new rural political order continues, and though no final decision has yet been taken by the government on this matter, there can be little doubt that hereditary political authority will once again become part of the rural political system in Mozambique.

Religious revitalization in Mozambique has also been characterized by a remarkable growth in the size and number of Christian inspired religious groups over the past few years, particularly in the centre and south of the country. Most of these groups have a strong redemptive character and mutual support functions, which give the faithful moral purpose and hope as they set about rebuilding their lives and communities, and enable them to make common cause in the face of

the economic hardships all are facing. Not surprisingly, such groups seem to attract primarily people from the poorest and most marginalized strata of rural society. Though many of these groups are denominationally linked to a variety of national and international evangelical Christian churches, they are often rather syncretistic and organizationally diffuse in nature, and their memberships remain strongly oriented towards local issues. For this reason, such groups are a rather heterogeneous political force, and are not likely ever to form a significant national, or even regional, voting block in the upcoming elections. At the community and local level, however, they may prove to be a political and social force to be reckoned with.

Although, such evidence suggests, the political and developmental prospects for Mozambique are not promising, it would be a mistake to conclude that all is lost to neo-colonial forces and to the more conservative expressions of religious revitalization. There are also some popular ideological and organizational responses to the current crisis that are taking on a more secular and progressive character. Indigenous mutual aid practices, such as labour sharing, community credit schemes, and the like, have all assumed increased importance in the current economic climate. More significantly, the rural poor are also beginning to organize in a more overtly political fashion. Thus, in order to resist the growing threat of expropriation, and to meet their own marketing and input needs, peasant farmers are organizing themselves into associations and cooperatives, often with the aid of Mozambican and foreign NGOs. Though most such initiatives are still at an embryonic stage, they are promising organizational developments that may mature into a more significant political force capable of keeping alive some kind of popular political project in Mozambique and of tempering the worst excesses of an increasingly neo-colonial state.

# Banking on Hunger

## Food Security in Zimbabwe

BY COLIN STONEMAN AND  
CAROL THOMPSON

*Colin Stoneman is at the University of York. Carol Thompson is at the University of Southern California and is currently living and working in Harare.*

In the 1980s Zimbabwe achieved what was widely described as an "agricultural miracle" in the sphere of food security, setting an example for a continent where such security was more often receding. This success was not accidental and owed little to market forces. It was planned (although, of course, it could have been planned better). Unfortunately, this erstwhile success story has been under some threat from structural adjustment programmes that have sprung from Zimbabwe's increasing entanglement with international financial institutions (see, *inter alia*, Lionel Cliffe, "Were They Pushed or Did They Jump? Zimbabwe and the World Bank," *SAR*, 6, no. 4, March 1991), an issue this article seeks to address.

### Planning food security

After independence in 1980 the new government followed a policy of promoting small-scale farmers in the communal areas while maintaining incentive prices and easy availability of credit for the large-scale commercial farmers (LSCF) sector. The former, now nearly a million in number, occupy 42% of the total land area, generally in the worst regions, where little land is arable and rainfall is at best erratic; the latter number about 4,500 and still control 11.5 million hectares (about 30% of the land, but including over 50% of the arable land).

Agricultural extension services to the communal areas expanded considerably, with help being provided to improve seeds and increase

the use of fertilizers and irrigation. For example over 90% of all Zimbabwean farmers now use hybrid maize seed which has been continuously developed in the country since the 1930s. The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) increased the number of depots to over 100 by 1985 to facilitate distribution of inputs and collection of harvests; previously a smaller number had serviced the commercial farms almost exclusively. Credit was also made available for the first time in the communal lands (even if not to the extent needed). Real expenditure per capita on health and education increased, providing rural health clinics and primary education throughout the communal areas.

With these improved services the communal farmers produced about 60% of the marketed maize by 1986, and over 50% of the cotton, both up from below 10% before independence. The growth rate of peasant production of maize over the 1980s was 9.0%, with the yield per hectare rising 6.7%, while comparable figures for cotton were 26.5% and 1.3%. (During this period there was also a modest redistribution of land, with about 54,000 peasant families being resettled, on mostly marginal land, and with the LSCF area being reduced from about 39% to the present total of about 30%.)

At the same time, the LSCFs gradually reduced their maize hectareage, diversifying into cash crops, primarily tobacco, but also horticulture, making the country one of the top cut flower producers within four years. (The LSCFs also produced about three-quarters of the country's demand for wheat, and milk and beef were produced in quantities sufficient to allow exports where markets were available.) Despite this shift, the expansion of peasant production highlighted above

allowed Zimbabwe to confirm its food self-sufficiency at the aggregate level, building up a stockpile of maize of between one and two years' supply from which it was able to export grain to neighbouring countries most years, usually funded by those countries' aid programmes.

During this period, the country's Grain Marketing Board (GMB) administered a guaranteed price for maize that was on average 12% above world market prices; this policy produced surpluses which could not usually be exported except at a loss, but the maintenance of a stockpile amounting to about a year's supply was deemed necessary for reasons of food security. As the GMB was required to sell to urban maize millers at a price that enabled them to make a profit whilst keeping prices to the consumers low, it incurred deficits that had to be covered by government. It also had to carry the costs of the stockpile, of a widening collection and depot programme aimed at helping distant producers, and maintained a "pan-seasonal" and "pan-territorial" pricing policy, the former an implicit subsidy to grain millers, the latter to distant producers.

### Dumping

There have been constraints on this planning process, of course. As a signatory of the Lome Convention, Zimbabwe benefits from guaranteed markets in the EC for sugar and beef. The down side of these advantages is that Zimbabwe, like other primary producers, has had to accept the closure of the European (and the US) market to dairy products, maize, soybeans and the like. Even worse, it has found its external markets ruined by dumping. It has been estimated that



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in the late 1980s the world maize price was depressed by about 40% by subsidized sales of both EC and US maize. The consequence has been a continuous forcing of commercial farmers out of maize production in Zimbabwe as government was obliged to keep guaranteed prices down so as to avoid unsaleable surpluses.

It is worth tracing the interactions of this situation with Zimbabwe's food security, GMB deficits, and peasant incomes. As we have seen, maize is mainly produced by the small farmers. This means - because of the unreliable soils and climates in the communal areas - that, with reasonable incentives to communal farmers, Zimbabwe is likely to be faced with over-production of maize from the communal areas in good rainfall years, while food security cannot be guaranteed in drought years without paying much higher prices to keep commercial farmers in maize production. Thus, as long as the world market is distorted by EC and US dumping and similar actions, the price that Zimbabwe has to pay for food security is over-production, a large stockpile, and GMB deficits. Ironically, it is also vulnerable to the charge that, in its efforts to contain the costs imposed on it by rich country dumping on the world market, it sometimes even contributed to lower peasant incomes and reduced food security!

#### Problems of liberalisation

Self-evidently, this is a difficult tightrope to walk. The problem is, however, that otherwise valid criticisms of aspects of the structure of government subsidies to maize production and marketing have been wrongly used as part of a frontal assault on intervention as such, and on the GMB's strategic role in maintaining food security and peasant incomes. (Note, too, that this assault occurs despite the admission by even its most ideologically-motivated "free-market" critics that the GMB has, on balance, been operated quite efficiently.)

Yet the fact remains that an undermining of the GMB's strategic role was a major contributory factor to the crisis of 1992 which required huge imports of grains - amounting to some 2.5 million tons in all - for the first time in several decades. Although it is too simple to state (as some commentators have done) that the World Bank ordered the GMB to sell off its maize stockpile just before the drought began, there is no doubt that it was under pressure to meet the schedule of deficit reduction in order to break even in 1995, and this meant closure of depots, downward pressure on guaranteed prices, and a halving of the stockpile through export sales.

It was in just this context that the 1992 drought strikingly confirmed the importance of the GMB. First, it worked highly efficiently, importing maize and distributing it throughout the country. The 74 surviving collection depots were used in the drought for distribution of food for supplementary feeding, and will now be expanded rather than suffering further closures as seemed likely before the drought. According to Richard Amyot, the executive director of the Commercial Grain Producers Association, their role will be widened to provide a decentralized network for agricultural inputs, banking and credit, while also providing facilities to small businesses.

Further, the board is seen as important for food availability - to make sure that hoarding by traders cannot occur, and to distribute inputs and collect grain in the remotest areas where private traders may not find it profitable to operate. Thus the drought has prompted some needed sensible reforms to the GMB's strategic role, whereas its whole role had been under threat before the drought exposed the dangers of such a course. Although the World Bank continues to be critical of the GMB's "development" goals (as contrasted with its commercial role) the drought has demonstrated the desirability of providing food security through a policy of strate-

gic grain reserves, market stabilization and extension of depots. Government therefore wants to continue subsidizing the GMB, despite the pressures from the structural adjustment programme.

There is a second issue. As seen, a major constraint on a risk-free, efficient operation of the GMB's maize strategy has been the insecurity of food production in most communal areas. This derives from the poorer average soil fertility, the lower and more variable rainfall, and the higher risk aversion of people with poor resources and prospects. A more effective food security policy would therefore have to be based on production in reliably watered areas, guaranteeing a steady income to the producers. and this, in turn, will require significant land redistribution. And this is something which is, in principle, achievable - given the underutilization of much commercial farmland (even the World Bank calculates that the LSCF cultivate only about half of their arable land) - without affecting either export earnings (tobacco occupies only 70,000 hectares or 0.6% of commercial farmland), or the LSCF role in food security (maize occupies about 150,000 hectares, under 1.3% of the area).

#### But will it be allowed?

Zimbabwe's decision in 1990 to adopt a structural adjustment programme resulted in a number of consequences for food security. As seen, the experience of the 1992 drought has already persuaded many in Zimbabwe, including some in government, that a larger stockpile is needed if the high costs of importing are to be avoided; this implies acceptance of the necessity to subsidize the GMB or whatever institution has to maintain the stockpile, although originally government, following World bank nostrums, seemed determined to rely on the market almost entirely.

Will the logic of structural adjustment nonetheless reimpose itself

in this sphere - both directly and indirectly - as the apparent lessons of the drought fade from memory? And what about devaluation, which can raise the profitability of export crops but also the costs of imported inputs (such as insecticides). On balance, commercial farmers will benefit from this, but those producing food for the domestic market or for their own consumption, may face higher import costs and lower domestic prices (even dumped food imports), so further harming the food security situation. Moreover, removal of subsidies on food widens disparities, as poorer families suffer most.

Structural adjustment also requires a restriction of government expenditure, a clear disincentive to even the modest degree of redistribution of land - so potentially important, in general terms, for the reasons mentioned above - that was heralded in the government's new land act of 1992. This is true both because of the cost of land acquisition, and also - even more importantly - because of the cost of development of the acquired land (including cheap credit for resettled farmers) so that the potentiality of the land is not lost through undercapitalization. And does the relatively active role for government that this process would seem to envisage also seem unlikely to be readily implemented in a time of "economic reform" and enforced liberalization?

\* \* \*

In sum, food security - defined as accessibility to an adequate food supply for everyone - was generally achieved by Zimbabwe in the 1980s. According to UNICEF (1993) the rate of malnutrition of children in Zimbabwe in 1990 was the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. There is evidence, however, that this favourable trend has already been reversed. To reverse it again will require an ever more effective programme of land redistribution and a relaxation of structural adjustment policies.

# Angolan Democracy

## The International Betrayal

BY VICTORIA BRITTAIN

*Victoria Brittain of the Guardian is SAR's Angola correspondent.*

A year after the elections, the catastrophe gripping Angola has deepened on every front, far beyond what even those most sceptical about the prospects for peace could have imagined. And yet by November, as the social and economic tragedy worsened daily and the country sank into barbarism, the international community merely continued with the kind of duplicitous negotiations that have provided cover for the war waged by Unita on a largely defenceless population.

Indeed – although no one was quite prepared to admit it – by November a crucial watershed had been passed. Thanks in large part to the failure of key international actors to back unequivocally the legitimate and now freely and fairly elected Angola government, a return to the framework of the Bicesse agreement of 1991 and a restoration of the election result was no longer possible. Angola's future was once again cast into limbo. The result of this policy – abundantly clear to those responsible in Washington and at the UN – can only be a long-drawn out conflict, a partition of the country, or the collapse of the authority of the existing government.

The UN estimate of 1,000 people dying each day in what it calls the worst war in the world, has been repeated since May 1993 – even though an Angolan government minister estimated in October that it could be as many as 2,000 a day! No one has enough access to the countryside – thanks to Unita's repeated attacks on UN convoys and planes – to know what the figure really is.

Nonetheless, we do know that in one year hundreds of thousands of people have died, a third of the population is displaced, the economy has collapsed, and the infrastructure of the country has been destroyed to a greater degree than even the worst times of the South African army invasions and air strikes during the 1970s and 1980s. This catastrophe has been Angolans' reward for trusting the international commitment to upholding their democratic choice.

### Reduced to rubble

The two month siege of Huambo, before Unita took control in March, proved only a modest foretaste of the Unita sieges of Cuito, Menongue, Malango and Luena as its partition strategy was pushed to its limits. The siege of Cuito lasted nine months and killed one third of the 100,000 population by shelling or starvation. Even after Unita finally allowed in UN planes, they prevented the sick and injured from leaving.

These towns have been reduced to rubble just as Savimbi promised when he proclaimed the return to war in October 1992. Unita laid minefields around the towns to keep people from their fields and fired on UN aid planes repeatedly in mid-1993, trying to starve these towns into submission. It is a paradox which well illustrates the anti-nationalist character of Unita that the people of Cuito had given Unita a majority in the elections. Leaves, insects, and even human bodies, became the food that allowed at least some of the towns' inhabitants to survive, but under conditions that defy description. The heroism of the young soldiers in these besieged garrisons has been

a moving testimony of what the human spirit is capable.

With a year's hindsight, Savimbi's radio broadcast, warning that if the results of the presidential and legislative elections were published he would return to war, was a last chance thrown away by the international community to stand up for the principle of democracy. His threat to make of Angola another Somalia has since been fulfilled, and the country is now shattered and traumatized well beyond the worst recent days of Mogadishu.

Paralysed by the speed of the collapse of the electoral option to which the MPLA had been so utterly committed, the government failed in October of 1992 to respond to Savimbi's retreat to Huambo, with reinforcements for the vulnerable garrison. (In accordance with prior agreements the MPLA government had also, in the run-up to the election, committed themselves – far beyond anything Unita was prepared to do – to demobilization and to the building of a united army; as a result, it took the government some time to regroup militarily to respond effectively to Unita's fresh surge.)

### Rewriting history

Now, a year after the events, Unita's attempted coup in Luanda and simultaneous attacks on major urban centres such as Lubango and Benguela, stand as a touchstone of the Orwellian reversal of reality that has increasingly characterized the portrayal of Angola's tragedy in recent months. Those days, which saw Unita's most audacious attempt to seize power, were transformed into "Unita's security concerns" by the UN officials responsible for the policy of negotiations between the two parties.

Indeed, dozens of articles, television and radio documentaries, in many languages - often made after clandestine visits to Huambo from Zaire and South Africa - have served to alter the image of the events of that weekend in Luanda and Lubango out of all recognition. The reality of battles by MPLA grassroots cadres acting in self-defence, in which many people from Unita's violent and provocative local "pilot committees" were killed, have become a bloodletting of Unita innocents encouraged by MPLA leaders.

This current version of a key incident in history is just one illustration of how an old CIA client like Savimbi has been able to count on the invisible support mechanisms of earlier eras in Washington still working to prevent a complete collapse of his long-standing hopes for power.

From October 1992, of course, that support became virtually open in the diplomatic sphere. In response to what was already a

war, the US, the UN, and South Africa began placating Savimbi, whose democratic credentials they had lauded for decades, promising him a future better than what had been decided at the polls. A year later, and despite the toothless UN sanctions voted by the Security Council in September, that placating continues, part of the negotiating process that has become the main focus of UN activity as the country bleeds.

The UN ban on arms and supplies to Unita was a much watered-down package from that originally proposed by Brazil (whose own version would have frozen Unita bank accounts and curbed its diplomatic, propaganda, and travel facilities). US officials were key in the behind-the-scenes politicking in New York that kept Unita from feeling any real heat from international disapproval. Boasts by Unita's military chief, General Ben Benn, that the sanctions would have no impact as Unita has supplies for ten years of war, may be

exaggerated. But no one on the government's side believes the sanctions - even if they are ever seriously put into place - will affect Unita's military strength.

#### Unita's backers

Savimbi has spent the year building that strength up with help from clandestine networks in South Africa and from Zaire, with the aid of the discredited President Mobutu. The South African connection remains extensive, although murky, and neither the ANC nor the Namibian government have been vocal on the issue.

Joe Slovo, chairman of the South African Communist Party, is the only leader to have made a public commitment to ending the destabilization from South Africa. He said last October that government explanations were "simply not good enough." The continuation, said Slovo, of the activities of "privatized clandestine networks originally established with official support to advance Pretoria's Total Strategy is not acceptable... such actions could



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not continue without some level of involvement – whether authorized or not – of those who were involved in these practices in the past on behalf of the state.”

Confusion about the South African connection has been deepened in recent months by the continued deliberate dissemination from Johannesburg of press reports that former SADF troops have been recruited by the Angolan government to train government soldiers. These stories – repeatedly denied by the Angolan military – have been a convenient mask for the South African soldiers fighting with Unita. At least two were killed after being captured in Huambo, and some wounded were flown out from nearby Gove airstrip to a clinic in Windhoek and then to South Africa.

Former members of the disbanded SADF Buffalo Battalion have been at the heart of much of the confusion as they sought a future in the changing Angolan situation. Some are now security guards for international companies, some have joined Unita, some have joined shady security concerns linked to western intelligence agencies that the Luanda government is helpless to monitor, and some have tried to reintegrate into the Angolan society they left years ago.

## Negotiations ... again

But the confusion around the question of mercenaries is a minor factor compared to the confusion around the question of peace negotiations. In reality, even as fresh talks ground on in Lusaka in November/December 1993, there seemed little genuine basis for successful negotiations (just as there had been little, we can now see, for the very first round of talks held in Namibe under UN auspices – that which led up to the now failed elections – just a year ago.) Unita leaders have made clear all along, both by their military actions and by their negotiating stance in the rounds in Addis Ababa and Abidjan, that what they are in fact demanding is power on

the basis of their military strength. But this is a “power-sharing” formula that would, of course, make a mockery of the UN-monitored election.

The latest strained attempt at negotiations must also be placed in its larger context. Since mid-summer 1993 when the former foreign minister of Mali, Alioune Blondin Beye, became UN Special Representative in Angola, confusion surrounding contact between the two sides has merely deepened. Negotiations have consisted of unspecified and secret talks between Unita and the UN. Thus Mr. Beye, an old associate of the Unita leadership, lost no time in going to Huambo to meet Savimbi in July. Thereafter, he repeatedly told journalists that he was “optimistic” that an end to the war was in sight.

Mr. Beye was at the heart of a diplomatic initiative in June and July to involve ANC President, Nelson Mandela, with Savimbi's long-standing African allies, King Hassan of Morocco and President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, in hosting a meeting between President Dos Santos and Savimbi. When the idea failed to get off the ground, Mr. Beye tried to convene a regional summit in Sao Tome or Gabon for the same purpose, and for weeks the press quoted him as saying talks were due to start. Behind this diplomacy was nothing less than the search for equal status for Savimbi with President Dos Santos. It is a mark of how far the Frontline States have come from their old cohesion in the toughest years of the anti-apartheid struggle that the ANC should find itself as part of a US-backed initiative that seriously undermined the political position of its old allies in Luanda.

The Angolan government resisted these initiatives. It insisted that the UN was committed by the Bicesse agreement to bringing Unita back to a ceasefire, demobilization, withdrawal from territory Unita has occupied, and acceptance of the election. Once those principles were

accepted by Unita, the government would be ready for discussions on the modalities. But Unita never really accepted the principles, despite a welter of confusing propaganda put out from Huambo, and from New York by UN spokespersons.

## Poisoning the future

Thus, in flat contradiction of Unita statements to the international press about the need for peace, every day Unita's clandestine radio continued to pour out a torrent of disinformation and to stir ethnic hatred, poisoning the country's future. Whatever the political outcome of the current impasse, this legacy may be irreversible. And the MPLA, already weakened in the years of ideological compromise and personal in-fighting ahead of the election, has since seen its base further eroded by the current economic disaster, and by the unprincipled practices of many of those in power.

Savimbi's powerful backers, including Mario Soares in Portugal, King Hassan in Morocco, Boutros Ghali in New York, and countless backers behind the scenes in Washington and South Africa, have taken ruthless advantage of this weakness. They have influenced the international community through 1993 to allow Angolans to be held to ransom until Savimbi, whose own totalitarian practices have been well known for years, is given the power he took by force when the polls denied it to him. The UN in Bosnia, has sought ineffectually to punish war criminals. In Angola, the UN needs to find the courage to follow an effectual policy against Savimbi before he has fulfilled his promise to destroy the country.

In the meantime, international lawyers are looking at the possibility of setting up an international war crimes tribunal to expose Savimbi's role in the horror to which Angolans have been subjected so long and which has so numbed the rest of the world.

# Trade Union Strategies

## The Debate Continues

*The interview with Sam Gindin published in SAR in May ("Mutually searching": Trade Union Strategies, South Africa and Canada," SAR, 8, no. 5) has occasioned considerable debate, some of which surfaced at a conference/workshop, held at York University, of South African and Canadian*

*trade unionists that was also reported on in our July issue ("Workers of the World, Debate," SAR, 9, no. 1). The issues raised have continued to be discussed, both formally and informally, and we feel privileged to be permitted to publish a further exchange of letters on the whole question that, we think,*

*helps carry the discussion further. The exchange consists of a letter to Gindin from Avril Joffe – one of the principal protagonists of the South African trade union-linked Industrial Strategy Project on whose activities Gindin was originally reporting – and Gindin's response.*

### from Avril Joffe to Sam Gindin

Dear Sam,

I hope this letter finds you well – if busy! I would have liked to be in Canada attending the various conferences relating to industrial strategies. As you know I have an 11-week old baby boy and travelling was out of the question.

Since you must be dealing with industrial strategy issues now I want to make some points about your interview in *Southern Africa Report* (May, 1993). I feel you have left this country with some misconceptions about what we, the Industrial Strategy Project [ISP], are trying to do.

Your interview suggests that the entire ISP is focused around industrial competitiveness and, further, that "growth models and industrial strategies that were more internally focused, more self-expansive" were not being considered. This is precisely the heart of the ISP, hence our focus on the building materials sector for a sustained housing programme, on power equipment and consumer durables for the electrification of the townships and subsequent expansion of the market; and on other sectors representing wage goods such as food and clothing. As you yourself say in your interview, these will "spread resources and develop markets throughout the coun-

try – and able to use existing skills and develop people's capacities to produce new goods across a broad front." We agree wholeheartedly!

You also suggest that the Economic Trends economists are "sceptical regarding ANC intentions ..." and hence we "advocate dealing directly, even exclusively, with capital ..." Our concern is most certainly around state capacities and the problem of state failures – whoever the ruling party – such as [mere] rent seeking behaviour. However our view here is that state failures and market failures exist in any economy and an industrial policy needs to be cognizant of both.

Nevertheless, contrary to what you say, we do advocate a role for the state. In fact all sectoral studies, as well as our own synthesis, talk of the need to establish forums of all key actors for different industries, for human resource development, technology policy formulation, etc., to identify the problems and respond with appropriate policy. In all of these we see the actors as being the big three – trade unions, the relevant state bodies, capital representatives – as well as other concerned groups depending on the sector or issue; these may be civics, local government, youth groups, women's groupings, university bodies, etc. In our

cross-sectoral studies in particular – those dealing with technology policy, competition policy, trade, human resource development and industrial relations – a significant role is identified for the state in providing the incentives, in establishing relevant institutions and in promoting capabilities.

A point I found difficult to make sense of is your assumption that the trade union movement and intellectuals associated with it have been fighting a uni-dimensional struggle – apparently against apartheid – and we must therefore embark upon a new struggle; and you add we don't have the energy to do so. This is such patronizing nonsense! For as long as there has been a South African Left there has been a debate about the relationship between apartheid and capitalism. The struggle has been at the same time one against racial oppression and for increased participation in all spheres of life; for an increase in democracy in society, particularly industrial and economic democracy. The difference now is not that we are suddenly confronted by capitalism, but that the fight has moved beyond one of resistance and abstention to one of engagement and reconstruction. It is our future that we are fighting for. Without an economy

able to deliver the basic necessities of life, to achieve a radical improvement in the social welfare of its population, or to sell the goods either locally or internationally, this reconstruction will never occur.

It seems to me that you have wanted to paint a very simplistic picture of what the Economic Trends research project on industrial restructuring is all about. No-one would claim we have all the answers. The trade union movement is pushing for a reconstruction accord, industry forums have been established for the auto industry, the electronics

industry, the clothing and textile industry and the mining industry, the National Economic Forum has found agreement on proposals around job creation while the National Training Board is considering proposals for a new training, grading and skill formation system with a significant input from the trade union movement on what such a system should be. The work of the ISP has contributed to most of these discussions and has helped identify some of the solutions and, at times, shape the direction - by identifying the problems, the challenges facing our industry and

formulating proposals which prioritize human resource development and the importance of trade union involvement.

There is a lot more I would like to highlight about your interview, but I'll leave it here. I simply wanted to raise a few points I found myself getting angry with. I hope you accept these criticisms. As you know I found your contribution and input at our November workshop helpful and interesting ....

Regards and take care

*Avril Joffe*

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## Sam Gindin replies

Dear Avril,

Nice to hear from you and I too wished you had been able to come here. It seems so long ago that I was in S. Africa. But when you say your son is only 11 weeks old, it hits me that I was there only a few months ago. The intensity of S. Africa inevitably fades somewhat as others like myself return to the "busyness" of trade union struggles here - though I have been trying to keep up and was excited about having a chance to participate in the Canadian conference with [the various South African participants].

I had wanted to write something when I returned but didn't have the chance to do so (beyond a short piece for our union paper). SAR had suggested that if I couldn't do an article, why not an interview; I agreed [see SAR, 8, no. 5, cited above]. An article might have emerged differently, with different nuances, but the interview did in general reflect what I had to say.

A quick comment on my "paternalistic nonsense." Commenting critically on the struggles of others, especially when they are so much more difficult and dangerous than ours, clearly invites such a charge. I was aware of this when I spoke at your seminar, spoke through SAR,

and participated at the Canadian conference [at York University, as cited above]. All I can say is that I made my comments quite conscious of the courage and intelligence of those I was speaking to and the different circumstances you face. I was determined to raise criticisms/concerns based on what I had learned as a union/activist. The points I made were themselves not original but part of an on-going debate within the international left and within South Africa. I presumed that, if I was wrong, others would not hesitate to challenge me and undermine my arguments. What has surprised me is the extent of the anger they provoked; frankly, I'm still in the dark on this.

Another quick comment on "engagement." I am not opposed to engagement. As an active unionist, I make, support, and even recommend compromises everyday in the name of "engagement." I do support COSATU's decision to enter into the economic forums and I do believe that groups like the one you are involved in can supply vital analysis and information to those involved. The issue is not whether to engage or not but on what terms, in what context, with what resources, for what reasons. On this general point we have no disagreement.

Rather than defend my comments on a point-by-point basis, let me summarize two or three observations/concerns. I should add that the discussions at the conference here in Canada reinforced most of them.

1. The ISP project did not have an explicit broader macro context. You were clearly aware of this and you and David acknowledged it early in the conference. At times, mention was made of this and specific links to that broader context were discussed. But that's a far cry from locating sectoral studies in a wider strategy.

It seemed to me that without a clearer idea of how the sectoral studies fit that broader context, fundamental questions don't get addressed or - more significant - get addressed in a way that is skewed by the focus on the sectoral approach.

Is the problem in South Africa one of becoming competitive in international markets or one of integrating the marginalized? How are the two related or in conflict? If infrastructure is needed will it be more subordinate to exports or to domestic links? Does the sectoral focus inherently bias the study towards "competitiveness" rather than "development" (the former being about using existing employed resources

more effectively, the latter being more about mobilizing unemployed resources)? How do such questions affect the role of the unions and the democratic movements? How do they affect how the ANC will see its role *vis-à-vis* the unions? Will the unions' defense of their standards and rights be identified as barriers to a competitive strategy?

2. The ISP explicitly addresses the last question by arguing that changes in capitalist production have created an opening that can overcome traditional labour-capital conflicts. Fundamental to your theorizing about sectoral strategies was the acceptance of a new "post-Fordist" paradigm in the workplace - one that allowed for labour-management win-win opportunities in the workplace and for niche expansions into international markets.

Of course there are always some points of win-win in the workplace that "unnecessary" conflict may make possible. How general these are in a capitalist society we may dispute. But let me keep my criticism here to a narrowly empirical level. A number of us have been arguing over the past decade that talk of a "new paradigm" has been overstated and that the real pressures on workers and their organizations during this period understated. The new evidence coming in on what is actually happening in workplaces is increasingly reinforcing what we've been saying - evidence here and in Japan, evidence coming from both bourgeois theorists and from the left.

You have to take this evidence seriously. It implies that the analysis particularly emphasized by Rafi [economist Rafi Kaplinsky, linked to the ISP], but which permeates much of the ISP work, must be rethought. If the gains for economic development here are minimal, how does it affect the workplace agenda? What if we encourage workers to find ways to be competitive but these only end up to require workers primarily to give up workplace

rights? How does all of this affect support for opening up the economy further - won't competitive pressures on the companies directly translate into competitive pressures on workers to get in line?

3. When I was at the conference in South Africa, there was obvious, if generally unspoken, tension between the ANC and others. The tensions involved the classic questions about social democratic governments in "power," questions the Canadian labour movement is now hesitatingly confronting with a great deal of discomfort. The tensions surfaced when the South Africans came to Canada [for the York University workshop] with regards to the role Tito [Mboweni, of the ANC's Department of Economic Planning, who participated in that workshop alongside the larger group of South African trade unionists] played, but again they weren't really addressed (I can understand the South Africans not wanting to debate these issues in Canada and in the presence of "others," but...)

I don't want to get into this issue here other than to say that it really is part of the other issues. If the ANC has already decided to make major accommodations with capital to achieve a level of stability (or if we think it will be forced into such a position), then we have to ask what the role of the trade union leadership will be. Will it be to

transfer this message to the workers, and, if so, is a corporatist, export-oriented strategy part of "selling" this message? If the unions are, on the other hand to play a more oppositional role, one that keeps the idea of transforming capital alive, does this imply a different orientation re industrial strategy? (I may be getting myself in more trouble by posing this issue rather starkly, but I both respect the difficulties facing the ANC and find myself in very strong disagreement with the direction it is taking, as indicated by Tito).

So. Time to stop myself from writing the article I never had time to write. Look Avril, I really do have incredible admiration for all of you, your personal histories, and your current dilemmas. What struck me so much in South Africa was that the nature of the current struggle was changing and that all the strengths that existed within the labour movement before do not in any easy way translate to the present situation. How do you deal with capital on an everyday basis and make the compromises necessary to achieve gains without weakening yourself and without creating the kind of institutionalization that demobilizes workers? What can the ANC do that keeps hopes of socialism alive rather than dismantles them?

These are questions we haven't answered here or elsewhere. We look to answers from the movement in South Africa and are critical when you too don't have adequate answers. Maybe that's unfair, but I have to say I feel quite unrepentant. Partly because I know you'll survive any of my criticisms quite well when they're off base and partly - mostly - because I don't know of any other way to engage comrades in searching for what's to be done and how.

Regards to everyone I met there. Keep in touch. It was good to hear from you.

In Solidarity,  
Sam

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# Counterpoint

BY MARIT STILES

*Marit Stiles is a member of the SAR editorial collective.*

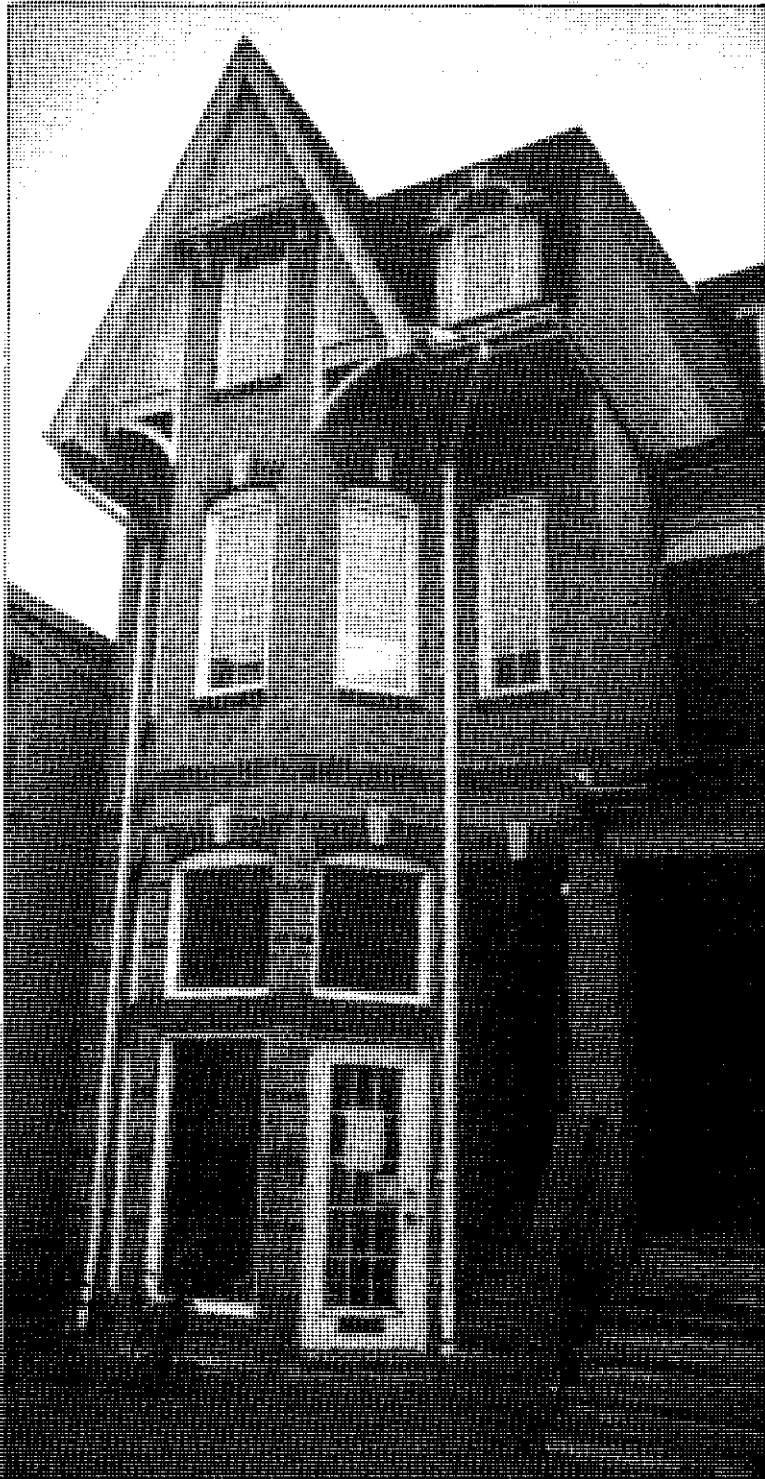
The opening of COUNTERPOINT in June of this year, in a renovated building in Toronto's St. Jamestown, was much-needed proof for solidarity groups that they can adapt to the chilly climate brought by the new economic order.

COUNTERPOINT is a resource centre for global analysis whose primary, but not sole, function is to nurture the prized collections of documents and publications collected over nearly three decades by its founding members - the Toronto Committee for Links between Southern Africa and Canada (TCLSAC), the Latin American Working Group (LAWG), and the Development Education Centre (DEC). The materials are the records of primarily third world economic and political struggles largely ignored by mainstream institutions.

In recent years, SAR has opened up debates about the "new terms of solidarity" demanded by fundamental global changes. With elections in South Africa now firmly on the agenda, the focus of southern Africa solidarity work on ending colonial and minority regimes comes to an end. Support for particular liberation struggles and defence of liberation movements in power must move in the direction of a broader understanding of solidarity based on shared experiences and perspectives on common problems in the South and North (see *SAR* editorial, March 1992).

COUNTERPOINT is the child of this fundamental re-thinking of priorities and outlooks. Its Resource Centre brings three previously separate collections together under one roof: Canada Latin America Resource Centre (CLARC), the Southern Africa Resource Centre (SARC), and the Development Education Centre. The Resource Centre is staffed by a team of librarians and information specialists whose focus is on developing and organizing a state-of-the-art information service. The staff are bringing the existing collections up-to-date and developing a comprehensive in-house database. The Centre hopes to play a central role in research, analysis and action on the global economy.

But COUNTERPOINT's mandate reaches beyond its resource centre. Indeed, although



COUNTERPOINT began as an idea for saving resource collections that were in danger because of a lack of staff and financing, it almost immediately evolved beyond that idea. Today, COUNTERPOINT provides office and meeting space for LAWG, TCLSAC, DEC and other solidarity groups such as Tools for Peace and the Horn of Africa Policy Working Group, an arrangement that increases the opportunities for the various organizations to develop a common agenda.

The ideas that underlie COUNTERPOINT are not particularly new. As George Cram, long-time member of LAWG has noted, over a decade ago LAWG was envisioning a centre that could house a wide range of activities and groups working for a new and better society. Yet, it was not until 1991 that the COUNTERPOINT Resource Centre became not just an interesting concept but a live possibility.

As Jonathan Barker noted in *SAR's* March 1992 issue, there has been a dramatic shift in the international and national context within which these groups have operated. Today, Northern domination of the developing world is exercised primarily through indirect economic and political relations rather than through direct political and military intervention. Ironically, the passing of the Cold War and the successes of Southern nations in ending the more obvious forms of domination may have weakened the critique of global inequality.

At the same time, we are witnessing the rise of popular activism in both the North and the South around gender issues, popular empowerment, economic restructuring and the environment. While in the 60s and 70s, many Canadians organized around liberation struggles in Vietnam, Nicaragua and Mozambique, today many of these same people focus their attention on issues in the North.

Recent global changes have led to a much greater degree of cross-over

between Northern and Southern issues. Reinvigorated coalition movements in Canada have emerged to battle the neo-liberal agenda of unemployment, cuts in social sector spending and free trade. These agendas have much in common with the issues and actions around which people in the South are organizing. Thus, Canadians mobilizing against the North American Free Trade Agreement are grappling with some of the same issues and enemies as women fighting oppressive economic programs in Central America or Zimbabweans struggling against the Economic Structural Adjustment Program.

With the multitude of shared experiences, issues and agendas that characterize North-South relations in the 90s, the realization has developed of a need for greater collaboration between activists rather than simply providing assistance and seeing solidarity as a one-way street. This means facilitating the exchange of information, collaborative research and more joint actions between groups in the North and South. Not only does this kind of support work have the potential for generating important new links to the South but it may also sow the seeds for fresh new constituencies in the North dedicated to similar action.

Finally, the founding organizations see the combining of their efforts in a new community service project as a way to strengthen their own organizations. By coming together to build COUNTERPOINT, they are making the best use of their limited resources while simultaneously strengthening their ability to carry out accurate and relevant global analyses.

Notwithstanding this new sense of hope and confidence, there is a continuing concern about a lack of sustainable funding. While COUNTERPOINT is receiving funding from the Canadian International Development Agency for its Canadian programme - funnelling infor-

mation into Canada from the South - there are still no dollars for developing links that will more directly benefit southern organizations. Nor has the rehousing of the resource centres relieved TCLSAC and the other groups of their responsibilities. These groups have to provide the funding for subscriptions or work out a basis for exchanges with other publications in order to keep the collections relevant.

According to librarian Aida Morris, the LAWG and TCLSAC collections are going strong. Work on the collection of the Development Education Committee halted in 1991 with financial and organizational problems, and work to rebuild the collection will take a lot of effort. It goes without saying that the COUNTERPOINT staff are kept very busy these days. At present, the Centre is open two afternoons a week for research, or at other times by appointment, but will be expanding its hours in the new year. Students and lawyers researching conditions in other countries to support refugee claims are giving the Resource Centre its greatest use.

Ironically, the moment of merging efforts to create COUNTERPOINT is also a moment when all of the founding groups find themselves in precarious situations organizationally, with both financial and human resources at a premium. Nonetheless, LAWG, TCLSAC and DEC see the combining of their efforts in a new project as a way to strengthen their own organizations. By coming together to build COUNTERPOINT they can make best use of their limited resources, and strength their ability to carry out accurate and relevant global analyses. With the transnationals leaving national boundaries behind to reorganize production globally, the need for North-South connections between labour and community groups and common strategies and actions takes on new urgency.

COUNTERPOINT can play a role in making this a reality.



# The Literate Factory

## A Mozambican Case Study

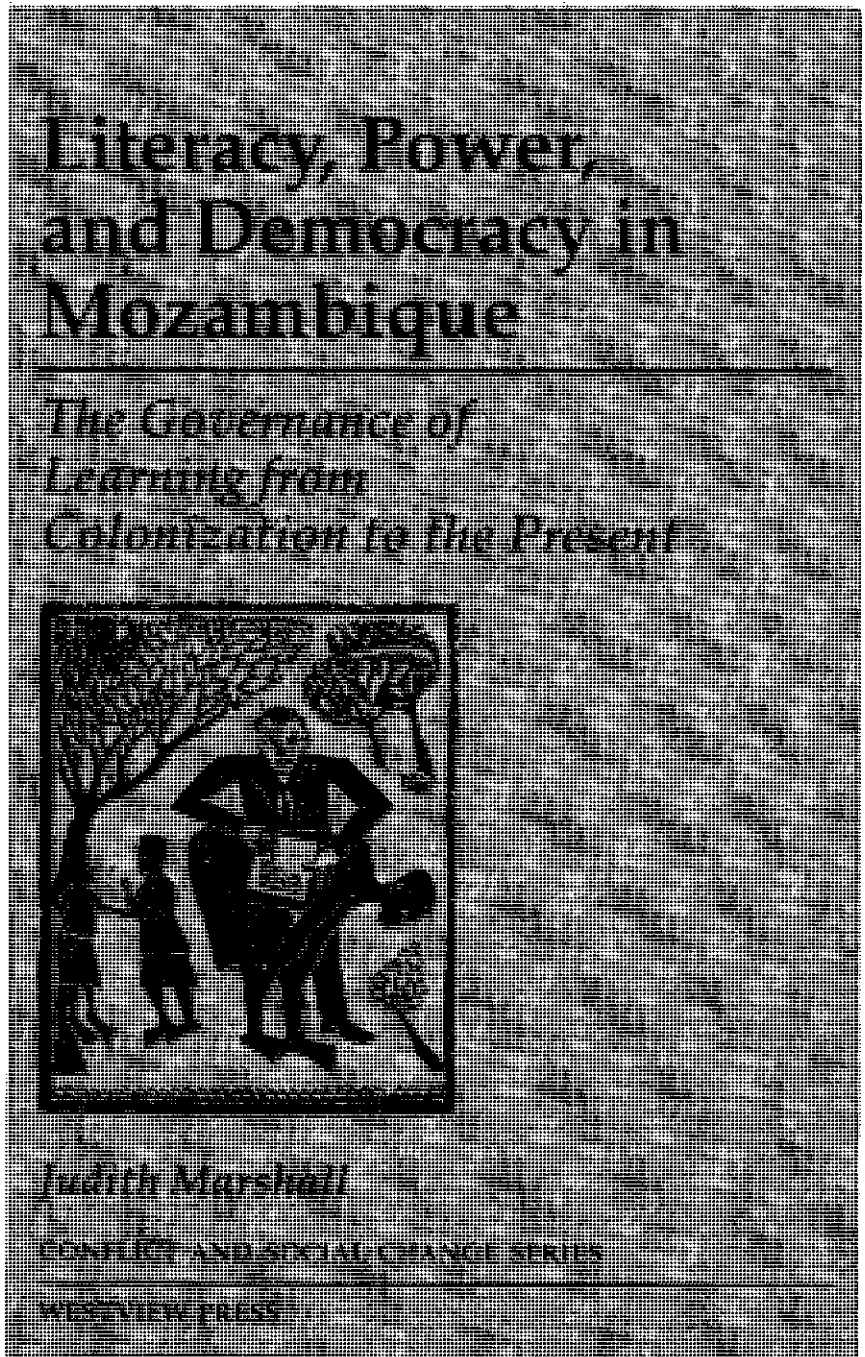
BY JONATHAN BARKER

*Jonathan Barker, a member of TCLSAC and former member of the SAR collective has, for many years, taught and done research on issues of African development.*

*Literacy, Power, and Democracy in Mozambique: The Governance of Learning from Colonization to the Present* by Judith Marshall, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado 1993. 313 pages.

Judith Marshall's remarkable new book left me with a collection of vivid images of the ambiguous realities of Mozambique's attempted transitions to socialism and democracy. I can see:

- Young literacy instructors donning the white smocks of colonial teachers before entering the room where they will teach distracted and fatigued factory workers who are several years older than they are.
- The replacement literacy teacher doing what the regular teachers never do - drawing students into active discussion of themes from their own lives, themes about selecting and planting seeds.
- The lively village meetings in the liberated zones with women and young people finding they could have a public voice and enjoying their new freedom.
- Workers calculating and negotiating about attending literacy class on the basis of how much the section manager will be put out, how much time it will take away from the pig-raising at home that is essential for survival, and how much another certificate might help with job security.
- The literacy teacher criticizing a woman's pronunciation, reducing her to silence and self-blame in a



class which was founded by a movement dedicated to empowerment of subordinated groups. The same woman is lively, outgoing, and irreverent in her own workspace.

- A nation given over for a brief year or two to an outpouring of meetings and discussions about how to change institutions and how to live in new ways.

- Workers at the food processing factory who receive far less than a living wage queuing for their daily allotment of loaves of bread.

The book is a compelling effort to understand better the pattern in the ambiguous and contradictory moments of Mozambique's failed transitions to socialism and democracy. One further image is that of Marshall herself. She is witnessing a literacy teacher using lesson plans which Marshall a year before helped to prepare. The teacher ignores the exercises in participatory interaction described in the plan and instead says things that demean and undermine the students. Marshall is dismayed, sad, angry. She determines to do her best to understand what is happening and why. In fact, she has understood a great deal and, what is more, the book does an impressive job of communicating her observations and her understanding.

The "governance of learning" in Mozambique is given a dramatic structure in the book. The gross pattern of change begins with the gloom of a racist, oppressive, and economically backward colonialism. There follows a breakthrough of liberating popular action built on FRELIMO's work in popular organization and education in the liberated zones in the north of the country. Then the reassertion of statist centralization and colonial hierarchies gradually confines and throttles the spirit of empowerment. At the same time even centralism is undermined by South African-abetted terrorist attacks and economic pressures. Finally, a chaotic shift to capitalism mandated by international fi-

nancial and assistance institutions also opens the way for a new and risky route to popular organization, self-help, and (just possibly) construction of a progressive and democratic civil society.

The book leaves you with more than images: it leaves a grasp of a promising approach to presenting and thinking about complex social and political change and it leaves several lines of interpretation of why a promising socialist and democratic project lost coherence.

The book has two central themes, one of experience and description and one of intellect and analysis. They work together. The theme of experience and description centres on the literacy classes at CIM, a large food processing factory on the outskirts of Maputo. It was nationalized by the FRELIMO government and favoured with skilled management, a relatively well-paid workforce, and a well supported literacy programme. Marshall wants to understand how the programme works under the best conditions available: where its problems cannot be explained by weak support or other local difficulties. She takes us around the factory, introduces us to key people in the literacy drama, and takes us into the literacy classes. The reader sees how the idea of empowering and liberating learning is transmuted into the re-enactment and revalidation of colonial hierarchies of gender, class, and power.

We also see something of the creation of the literacy training teaching materials and teaching programmes and the training of the instructors. Empowering and participatory practices are recorded in the teaching materials, but they are not embodied in the training of the instructors.

The factory itself and the wider lives of instructors, managers, and workers also come into the description. The imperatives of production take precedence over literacy training and at the best of times work-

ers have to negotiate training time against the grain of the labour process. Family obligations, especially for women, pull workers away from literacy classes and render them pre-occupied and exhausted when they are present.

Time and again repertoires of behaviour ingrained as normal practices regulate interactions and exclude the energizing growth of confidence and competence. The trend of the description decisively favours the bureaucratic subversion of the original idea of literacy for liberation. Yet, we gain glimpses of the unrealized possibility when a good teacher who really understands the programme and who has skills and experience takes a turn in class. That day the learners shine. We even see that trainers and training might work differently if somehow the lessons learned by educators who visited Brazil and Nicaragua, lessons about how to see themselves, could be transmitted to other trainers.

The theme of intellect and analysis centres on the question of what happened to the promise and the project of socialist and democratic transition. What happened specifically in the case of the literacy programme and, more broadly, what light can be thrown on the wider political failure? The search takes Marshall historically to a study of the place of education in Portuguese colonialism and the experience of schooling and language which Mozambicans brought to literacy training. We also learn about the debates on education in FRELIMO before it gained power and as it takes control of the state apparatus.

An approach used extensively in the study deserves much wider use. It is the analysis of the formation and regulation of social and political "spaces" conceived in a rather concrete manner as places of meeting and expression. Here the literacy classes are the social spaces at the centre of analysis. But the account does not stop at the

spaces themselves; they are seen as situations embedded in wider ramifying structures. These include the factory and the industrial system of which it is a part; the education administration; the party and women's and workers' organizations that extend into the factory and into national reaches of power; the discourses about men and women, schooling, race, and authority which people imbibe; the network of family ties and obligations which make claims on each person.

Using ideas from Michel Foucault, Philip Corrigan and others, Marshall traces these cascading influences on the regulation of the political and social spaces which are literacy classes. A similar approach could be used to deepen understanding of cooperatives or neighbourhoods or popular organizations. The conclusion she is drawn to is that colonial discourses of hierarchy and imperatives of statist control of an embattled government overwhelmed the skills and training of the literacy cadres. On her own evidence, I would give more importance to the struggle for power, place, and rewards in the administration of the factory and of literacy training. People were out to save their jobs.

At a deeper analytical level lies a critical understanding of the function of education and literacy within capitalism and its potential role in a transition to socialism. In capitalism, argues Marshall, literacy is a means of regulating and controlling people. "Social life is opened up to regulatory practices through the establishment [via mass literacy] of textually mediated discourse. People are worked up as social categories such as 'battered women,' 'single parents,' 'illiterate' and treated as administrative categories, their differences homogenized into one common client identity by bureaucracies and ruling institutions" (p. 14). However, if literacy takes the form of "social literacy" in which "collective groups

of women and men name and validate their day to day experiences" (p. 26), it can become an empowering and democratizing force.

In respect to the empowering potential of literacy, two decisions in Mozambique had a profound influence on its function. Marshall mentions them, but I am not certain she gives them enough weight. One decision was to teach literacy in the Portuguese language. There were strong reasons for choosing Portuguese as the language of instruction, but it had the effect of making it impossible for most learners to "name and validate their everyday reality." They had to learn Portuguese as they learned to write it and had to feel clumsy in its use. Moreover, Portuguese carried in it colonial meanings, feelings, and relationships, as Marshall well shows. It favoured those favoured by colonial rule and penalized those penalized by colonial rule. It had an urban, statist bias which would be very difficult to overcome.

The second decision was to place literacy training in workplaces: factories, offices, and large agricultural enterprises. This choice not only reinforced the urban bias of the use of Portuguese, it also made it very difficult to realize the democratizing potential of social literacy. While the ideas of democratic management and worker control have appeal and interest, the immediate reality of larger workplaces in Mozambique and elsewhere is the imperative of hierarchy. Colonial factory management was particularly authoritarian. Newly nationalized factories and farms faced a complete turnover in management as the Portuguese fled. Even where there was a desire to democratize management, establishing control had to be the priority. Marshall indicates that literacy training was seen by managers as a threat to their personal positions. What if an experienced worker achieved the education qualifications of the young and inexperienced manager? Many workers who

joined the literacy classes saw literacy as a means of liberation, but almost always in a personal sense and often in the sense of moving up the job and security hierarchy. Might it be that villages and neighbourhoods are better settings for literacy as empowerment? There people can meet as citizens and address shared issues of living and working in the same society and, under the right political conditions, have access to democratic political spaces. This is not a question that Marshall seeks to answer, but it is one worth raising.

Marshall does raise the question about how these and other decisions that worked against democratization were made. She does not pretend to answer them. However, the book gives a magnificent account of the place of literacy training in Mozambique's socialist project and it brilliantly explores the wider issues of a process of democratization in a society of inherited colonial and capitalist discourses. Marshall holds out some hope, at the end, for new spaces of democratizing action in the chaotic Mozambique of structural adjustment.

There is much more in the book than I have been able to mention here: ideas about race and class, as well as gender; ideas about culture and learning and the special circumstances of the war of liberation; and ideas about doing and evaluating the teaching of literacy. The book can be read selectively. Those who find the discussion of capitalism, the state, and literacy heavy going can jump right into the case material. A reader with a special interest in colonial education will learn a great deal from the appropriate sections of the book. A person who wishes to understand more about techniques of teaching literacy can find much that is pertinent. Unfortunately the book omits one tool of literacy which would have made it much easier to use; it lacks an index. A good index is a real necessity in a book of this complexity, subtlety, and learning.

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