

# Southern Africa REPORT

Vol. 10 No. 3

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## ANC Policies



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UNDER THE  
MICROSCOPE:  
THE ANC IN POWER  
Patrick Bond

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MEMBERING  
THE SLOVO

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THE ULL CURVE  
SOUTH AFRICA  
BY  
Mzed Mayekiso

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### Up to the Challenge?

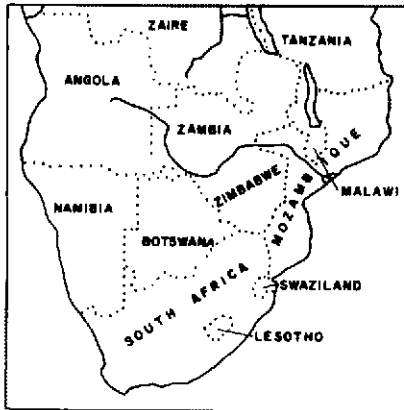


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# Southern Africa REPORT

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## Southern Africa REPORT

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*Cover photo: School in a squatter camp near Johannesburg.  
Some of the school funding comes from private US corporate donations.*

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*Afrikaner bean farm in Eastern Transvaal 1994. Labourers taking a break.*

## Policy and Power

As Patrick Bond suggests in his lead article in this issue, overseas progressives who have long supported the liberation struggle in South Africa — and, more specifically, backed the African National Congress itself — are increasingly uneasy about the direction the ANC government has taken since assuming power last year. Hasn't it adhered far too closely to a neo-liberal line in the economic sphere? Hasn't it shown far too strong an inclination to inhibit rather than to unleash popular energies as a force for the on-going transformation of South Africa?

Bond's sample is drawn from left economists, mainly American, gathered recently in Washington to discuss things South African. But the questioning, even querulous, mood is much more widespread than that: it is evident, certainly, in many circles here in Canada. As you will see, Bond finds much of this discussion one-sided and unduly negative in its overall cast. But he would no doubt be quick to acknowledge that such questioning is not confined to the world beyond South Africa. A flurry of public documents released inside the country in the latter part

of last year registered a growing unease within South Africa's own popular movement as well.

Thus, a document prepared by the ANC's partner organization, the South African Communist Party, for November's "Socialist Conference for Reconstruction and Development" underscores the necessity to challenge within the movement the pervasiveness of "neo-liberal macro-economic assumptions." It also presents a long litany of policies mounted by the new government that manifest merely "defeatist and fatalistic assumptions"

about the extent to which South Africa must reintegrate itself into the world economy and also narrow aspirations towards a more sweeping redistribution of wealth and resources and "the decommodification of basic needs."

Or take the paper released by South Africa's leading trade union congress, Cosatu, on the eve of the ANC's Bloemfontein conference in December. As *Southscan* (16 December, 1994) reports of this paper, "without naming him, it undermines the positions on finance and trade set out by Trevor Manuel, attacking in particular the 'dogmatic adherence to rapid unplanned trade liberalization and the lifting of all protective tariffs'." And the paper also questions the selling-off of state assets, adding that "Our opposition will not be softened by the so-called 'Malaysian route' whereby individuals from the black population are enriched by the sale of state assets, while their

communities end up suffering." And yet, only a few weeks later, there is Vice-President Thabo Mbeki in Bonn not just reciting the litany of competitiveness and lowered corporate taxes to lure investors but, quite explicitly, dangling as a carrot favourable deals linked to the possible sale of extensive state holdings!

Small wonder that Bond, even in his reluctance to preach despair, emphasizes that positive outcomes must, nonetheless, not be taken for granted. As he argues in his article, they will have to be won on the ground by people – grounded, in particular, in the still vital organs of South Africa's civil society – who press to draw out the most progressive possible implications of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme.

This will not be easy. Nor will the task of *evaluating* the process of doing so. The certitudes of past left economic debates are no longer so

easy to sustain. And the situation, both local and global, that confronts the ANC is a harsh and challenging one. We hope to publish more articles like that by Bond that begin to provide a language, critical but sympathetic, in which to talk about the contradictory picture that post-apartheid policy-making in South Africa presents.

\* \* \*

Of course, in doing so we will need to look both at the micro and the macro pictures. Consequently, as complements to Bond's article, we have two more specific case studies: of policy developments in both the housing and the health spheres, written by Barry Pinsky and Yogan Pillay respectively. And we provide several rather different articles about South Africa as well, a trenchant criticism by Mzwanele Mayekiso of current attempts to rewrite South Africa's recent history in the interests of a conservative perspective on the present, and two memorials, by writers closely associated with *SAR* (Linzi Manicom and John Saul), for their friend, the late Joe Slovo.

Nor is the rest of the southern African region forgotten. Thus Richard Saunders investigates "civil society" in its Zimbabwean manifestations, an important theme in its own right but also full of possibly salutary hints for South Africans who now seek to strengthen civil society in their own country. Our Angola correspondent Victoria Brittain returns, once again, to the sad story of Angola – and to the continuing centrality to that story of the grim figure of Savimbi. And David Pottie talks with Zimbabwean AIDS activist, Tisa Chifunyise, about some of the ramifications of that dread disease – so prominent a killer across the entire region – in Zimbabwe. In short, as we move through our tenth year of publication of *SAR*, the story we have to tell doesn't necessarily get any prettier. But the telling of it seems as important as ever.



Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

Squatter camp, Natal 1994

# Under the Microscope: The ANC in Power

BY PATRICK BOND

*Patrick Bond lectures in social policy at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In 1994 he served as an editor of the RDP and the RDP White Paper.*

A ballroom in a posh Washington DC hotel in early January was an unlikely venue, perhaps, but that's where I was forced to glimpse most clearly the emerging international Left consensus on the state of economic policy-making in South Africa. It was a panel organized by the Union of Radical Political Economics on the subject of South Africa's integration into the world economy, sandwiched between the tasteless white bread of the American Economics Association annual meetings.

The political economists gathered that evening commented with surprising familiarity and insight on the thorny dilemmas faced by the Government of National Unity. For though their hearts are assuredly with the ANC, their minds are on information supplied by the Financial Times, Economist and Wall Street Journal, and, sadly, they find no intrinsic reason to doubt key pronouncements of the haute-bourgeois press:

(a) *Once in government the ANC quickly adopted orthodox capitalist policies, thanks to influential realists (those often mentioned, aside from President Mandela and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, are Deputy Finance Minister Alec Erwin, Trade and Industry Minister Trevor Manuel, and the late Housing Minister Joe Slovo) - and at the prodding of ex-Finance Minister Derek Keys, Reserve Bank Governor Chris Stals, Anglo American's Bobby Godsell, Rand Merchant Bank's Rudolf Gouws and their ilk;*

(b) *This was initially rewarded by quite respectable international bond market ratings ("investment grade"), and by the applause of most local and international corporate leaders; and*

(c) *Although expectations and desires remain high amongst ANC constituents, they are not too high, for the masses will wait years before their alienation and grumbling over unmet basic needs turns into widespread social unrest.*

As anti-apartheid veteran (and University of Pittsburgh African Studies professor) Dennis Brutus put it, "The struggle within the ANC between TINA and THEMBA - There Is No Alternative, or There Must Be an Alternative - seems to have been won by those who want to push into the world economy at all cost, even gutting the RDP via the White Paper, accepting IMF conditionality, destroying once-protected industries, and encouraging arms exports." Commentators from the floor echoed Brutus, praising the February 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Program's* vision but confirming their sense of its emasculation in the "White Paper on Reconstruction and Development" (the government's implementation plan, released in September, which sets out more forcefully a series of conservative economic principles).

## Too negative?

What sort of rebuttal would have been in order? Is it certain, in this phase of SA's history, that "sound" macroeconomic policy will negate campaigns to meet basic needs, efforts to reform education, construction of affordable housing for all, a dramatic upgrading of public health, provision of basic services and so on?

Is Cosatu correct to worry that "the RDP White Paper will reduce the RDP to no more than a social net to cushion the impact of job losses and poverty"? Could the original RDP become "fairly worthless" as a result of dilution in the White Paper, as the progressive National Institute of Economic Policy (formerly Macroeconomic Research Group) suggests? Are prospects for realizing Left RDP objectives doomed because of government commitments to budget-tightening, privatization, extremely high interest rates, removal of protective tariffs, currency liberalization, and the failure to even consider Keynesian economics (stimulating overall growth) through massive public works, housing projects, wealth redistribution and the like?

But was the consensus that dominated this meeting too negative? Perhaps not, but I also thought back to what was once the RDP's strong grounding in popular demands and struggles, and its genesis through a relatively democratic policy-writing process. And I considered Minister Jay Naidoo's defence of the RDP White Paper strategy. Do not be "too simplistic so as to reduce the need for fiscal discipline to a neo-liberal agenda," Naidoo insisted last November. "Fiscal discipline is an instrument - it's a tool for either pursuing a neo-liberal agenda, which is antagonistic to the interests of the majority of people, or for pursuing a radical agenda, which addresses the needs of the majority of people, and addresses growth and development as interdependent issues. It does not belong to Margaret Thatcher or to the IMF, and that is the assumption that some of our comrades are making." Naidoo hopes to smash the apartheid bureaucracy through some of the White Paper's state re-



*The informal economy; northern suburbs of Johannesburg 1994*

Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

structuring, budgeting, and project-funding commitments.

And there is some consolation, too, in the fact that the overall political objective of ANC governance appears not to pad the bureaucracy with a new petty-bourgeois class of civil servants, as the Zimbabwe African National Union did following liberation (such a class ultimately becomes a cushion against pressures for further-reaching transformation, and, in some cases, a sturdy alliance partner of local big business, the imperialist development agencies, and other status quo interests).

But to most on the Left these cannot be terribly convincing rebnt-

tals for, meanwhile, former trade unionists Naidoo and Erwin are gaining glowing praise as "hard-nosed ANC pragmatists" from *The Economist*. The Reserve Bank and Finance and Trade/Industry Ministries are advancing the Thatcherite agenda much further than had been possible during the apartheid era. And the existing (white) petty-bourgeois bureaucrats are doing their best to frustrate the more radical of ANC officials. Indeed, bureaucrats are adapting to lean, mean White Paper rhetoric as quickly as did big business to the RDP's "basic needs" promises, and are learning to make the right noises and avoid threats to their survival.

#### Neo-liberalism no answer

But from the profound anxieties expressed in that Washington ballroom by allies of South African liberation, emerged a couple of conclusions. First, the neo-liberal strategy will fail, even on its own terms. Although the South African currency has stood up well enough thus far - even while the gold price has dropped - and although after such a long (four-year) depression, GDP growth and a modicum of private fixed investment have now materialized, there can be no doubt that neo-liberalism cannot generate sustained development (or even a smooth route to capital accumulation). The key structural problems

## anc in power

remain terribly difficult to fix using the light-weight neo-liberal tool-box.

The more durable problems include vast excess capacity in many industrial sectors, insufficient consumer buying power amongst the black majority, inadequate global competitiveness (bad and expensive corporate management, debilitating lack of international savoir-faire, relatively high wages compared to Indonesia, high costs of production due to apartheid planning, etc.), the structural bias of production towards luxury (not basic) goods and away from capital goods (machinery), inefficiencies caused by enduring racial and gender imbalances, the drain of capital abroad or into speculative investment pools controlled by a small crew of parasitic, unpatriotic financiers, and so forth.

If, to illustrate the fragility of the neo-liberal fix, World Bank "success stories" like Mexico can claim a short, dramatic spell of economic recovery (after a decade-long, debt-induced depression), this is just as easily followed by renewed financial catastrophe: a 40% devaluation of the peso, a stock market crash, soaring interest rates and inflation, an inability to repay foreign debt (and need for \$40 billion bailout), and profound crisis of confidence in the ruling regime, within the short space of a week in late December.

Second, as Brutus stressed, over the past couple of decades only a set of policies explicitly opposed to neo-liberalism – state influence over industrial development, directed (and inexpensive) credit, tight exchange controls, restrictions on the activities of multinational corporations, extensive land reform – have served as a basis for successfully entering the world economy, in the manner, say, of the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) of East Asia. For South Africa, said Brutus, this path would have to avoid the labour exploitation and social repression that accompanied NIC successes.

This was amplified in comments

by Marty Hart-Landsberg, a NIC expert and close observer of South Africa: "Mandela appears to have accepted the World Bank/IMF version of the Asian NIC experience: that those countries achieved their rapid growth largely through the adoption of free-market policies. Nothing could be further from the truth, especially as far as Taiwan and South Korea are concerned. As many economists now admit, South Korea and Taiwan maintained very strong controls over trade. They pursued exports at the same time that they worked to limit imports to only those products that complemented their industrialization strategy. They certainly minimized consumer oriented imports. They also maintained state control over the banking system and used that control to allocate capital to targeted

sectors. As for foreign direct investment, both countries maintained a fairly strong system of regulations. South Korea for example, kept foreign investment to a minimum. Multinationals were not allowed to set up shop if their goal was to produce for the domestic consumer market. Multinationals were also not allowed to borrow money in the local market to fund their investment."

What alternative policies, based on the NIC success, do progressive US economists like Hart-Landsberg advocate for South Africa? "Obviously there is no simple answer, or at least I do not have one. As a starting point, however, it would be wise to look at the experience of the rest of Africa. That experience says limit foreign borrowing (which



Homeless youths, awakened in abandoned vehicle in a Durban shopping mall

Eric Miller – Impact Visuals

means turning down many offers) and encourage only those foreign investments that support domestic industrial advancement as opposed to satisfying domestic consumption (why welcome PepsiCo and Luster Cosmetics back to produce consumer goods, for example, as the South African government appears to be doing). It also says maintain credit controls and import controls to the greatest degree possible. Finally, that experience also suggests that South Africa should look to shape a regional development strategy, one that ties the country's future to the creation of a regional consumption and production base that has the potential to be self-sustaining." I agree with these arguments, and I don't think they are marred by excessive distance or ideological bias.

## What's left?

A South African policy elite doggedly committed to orthodoxy may have to learn the hard way, however. And, indeed, there is currently some real consternation that the economy appears to face intense difficulties over the next period (Manuel has expressed this concern publicly). Leading bourgeois economists have, in the Financial Mail, recorded their sense that SA's presently fragile economic growth may peter out this year (others suggest 3% growth is feasible, still lower than the rate of population growth). The level of new investments is pathetic, prospects for attracting foreign capital on the scale of the 1950s-60s are nil, and, even before Mexico's debacle, foreign financiers had begun downgrading SA securities to much higher-risk levels.

Problems in maintaining a positive balance of payments (funds flowing into SA, as opposed to those draining out) are emerging, thanks to this year's decline in exports of minerals and agricultural products, as well as because of huge bills for foreign debt repayment and financing imports. If there was even a modicum of political will, such

bills could be eased by renegotiating the apartheid-era loans from London and New York banks - as some delegates to the November conference in Johannesburg on SA Left Unity mooted - and by reconsidering the import flood of luxury consumer goods (which according to the RDP should be taxed) and machinery (in the latter case, more imaginative state industrial policy would unlock the potential for creative import substitution).

But GATT requirements that markets be opened wide now represent an overwhelming deterrent to self-reliance, with Manuel apparently willing to go above and beyond the brutal liberalization already demanded by anonymous international trade officials. Reduction of tariffs occurred so rapidly that within three months of taking office, a countervailing blast was aimed at Manuel by labour leaders from the textile and auto industries in the form of demonstrations and public denunciations, but to no avail.

Naidoo has stood up to international neo-liberalism more firmly, however. Even while his office commissioned a frighteningly orthodox development plan for South Africa's cities from the World Bank's urban wrecking team (hopefully never to be implemented), Naidoo recommitted himself to the crucial RDP plank barring foreign loans for domestic development: "Borrowing money from abroad increases the country's deficit, which in turn forces us to take more money out of our budget - out of housing, health care, education, etc - to finance interest payments." Of course, one would rather see more rigorous arguments deployed against World Bank loans, arguments that underscore the harsh free-market conditionality embodied in development policy, the cost of foreign - as opposed to domestic - debt when the currency declines, the lack of need for foreign funds due to lack of foreign inputs in meeting basic needs, and the high level of existing liquidity in the SA

financial market. But this at least keeps some of the most rabid neo-liberal wolves at bay.

Moreover, I have sensed a strong level of residual accountability in Naidoo's office to his former comrades in civil society. Consider, for example, the RDP White Paper's strong commitment to the class instruments of poor and working people:

*With respect to mass-based organisations of civil society - especially the labour movement and the civics - their role in the establishment of political democracy was central. They have also won very substantial improvements in the social and economic lives of their constituents. A vibrant and independent civil society is essential to the democratisation of our society which is envisaged by the RDP. Mass-based organisations will exercise essential checks and balances on the power of Government to act unilaterally, without transparency, corruptly, or inefficiently.<sup>1</sup>*

Indeed, if Naidoo musters the will and sustains his power within Cabinet, he has mandates within the White Paper to help build radical social movements. There is scope for what he has termed a rural version of Cosatu - "Government has a duty in terms of the RDP to encourage independent organisation where it does not exist, such as rural areas" - and for broadening civil society where it

<sup>1</sup> One provision that has generated some paranoia, thanks in part to rather hysterical coverage by the *Weekly Mail* and *Guardian*, is the licensing process RDP Minister Jay Naidoo and his deputy Bernie Fanaroff envisaged for those Non-Governmental Organizations which take government funds for RDP-related work. Given the many charlatan development agencies, the prolific corporate-oriented think-tanks, and the thousands of associations serving white, middle-class civil society, this process offers some sort of sieve at a time when all manner of swindlers and hucksters claim allegiance to the RDP.





Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

Street sellers outside mall in Johannesburg northern suburbs. Unemployment provides few alternatives.

has been weak: "Strong consumer and environmental movements are essential in a modern industrial society and should be facilitated by Government."

Few statements better confirm to peasants, the urban poor, women, the youth and the working class generally that their efforts these past years have not been in vain. These sentences restate a commitment - in my view genuine - that the best, most "people-centred" components of the mass democratic movement and of democratic movement traditions must remain alive and well within the RDP.

But will Naidoo's office pass sufficient resources along to provincial RDP Commissioners to make these

words ring true? Will the provincial politicians and bureaucrats operate with a similar spirit of openness and self-criticism (or instead become clientelist patronage machines)? Will the stage of rank corporatism that has sometimes characterised movement leadership's deals these past few years be relegated to history? Will, for example, formerly radical grassroots leaders who now occupy key provincial ministries eventually gain the confidence and competence to deal with the occasional land invasion or with illegal immigrants in a humane way, instead of demonizing them and resorting to the forced removals so tragically reminiscent of the past?

Who would dare offer unreservedly affirmative answers?! But

speaking personally, from afar, and retaining powerful memories of the occasional intellectual and moral victories of THEMBA (Zulu, for "hope") over TINA within broad ANC - SACP - Cosatu - Sanco gatherings, I have a bit more optimism than the world-weary comrades gathered in the Washington hotel ballroom. Specifically, this is optimism that the powerful grassroots forces behind liberation can regain lost momentum, and that the yawning potholes now emerging on the bourgeois economic path will hurriedly compel the still-formidable - as well as many brand-new - organizations of the poor and working-class to demand that their representatives and leaders take an entirely different direction.

# Spelling Out the Policies



Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

## I. The Housing Question

**BY BARRY PINSKY**

*Barry Pinsky has spent most of the past two years working in South Africa on housing policy issues as part of a Rooftops Canada capacity building program with partner NGOs and trade unions.*

One month before his death, South Africa's Housing Minister Joe Slovo emerged - as he put it - 'unscathed' after presenting his Housing White Paper to his Cabinet colleagues

in South Africa's Government of National Unity (GNU).

The credit for this unanimity attests to Slovo's political weight and the strong ANC commitment to housing in its election platform, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP).

Equally important was the broad consensus-building process that preceded Cabinet endorsement of the Paper's policy proposals. This

started in the National Housing Forum where all major stakeholders had been working for over two years. The ANC effectively led the Forum's "non-statutory" groups, especially when negotiations with government intensified in late 1993.

The Forum and the government had agreed on many of the basic elements in the White Paper before the April 1994 elections, and incorporated them into an interim hous-

ing program that is now being implemented. The process of negotiating a new housing policy continued after the election of the Government of National Unity, although the Forum's role decreased as Slovo, in his role as the new Housing Minister, increasingly used bi-lateral meetings to bring major players on board.

Slovo also prepared the way by convening a national housing summit in late October in Botshabelo, apartheid's notorious human dumping ground, where some 250,000 people live 50 kms from their only source of work, Bloemfontein. One thousand delegates representing the homeless, communities, financial institutions, the construction industry, and governments at all levels committed themselves to the national housing strategy, the basis for the White Paper.

The Summit was also an opportunity for Slovo to bring assertive new provincial premiers and their housing ministers into line. The press were touting proposed quick-fix provincial deals with big developers. Many of these new politicians have been playing a populist card, making largely unrealistic promises about the housing they are going to build for their constituents.

### The housing challenge

Apartheid's housing legacy includes millions of "squatters"; overcrowded township houses, flats, and hostels; 720,000 families informal houses in sites and services schemes, and undetermined millions of rural people and farmworkers in grim housing conditions with poor access to water and basic sanitation. It is widely acknowledged that there is a shortage of 1.5 million houses and that it is increasing at a rate of some 175,000 to 200,000 units every year.

It is little wonder that the admonition in the Paper's preamble, "The time for policy debate is now passed - the time for delivery has arrived," has been widely welcomed.

It is unlikely that the Paper will suffer much from Parliamentary

debate before it is proclaimed as official housing policy. If nothing else, substantive attacks on its content and by inference, Slovo's legacy, will be seen as unseemly. More to the point, the overall housing strategy has the potential to deliver what surely must be a much more important memorial to Slovo - the ANC's election target of one million homes within five years.

The strategy is not, however, entirely unproblematic and the White Paper acknowledges that many essential components still need to be defined.

### The White Paper

The central issue leading up to the White Paper, as in most housing policy debates, was "width vs. depth." That is, once there is agreement that government resources should be used to address the housing problem, how should these resources be distributed and to whom?

The White Paper outlines a vision that will eventually allow everyone to have access to a permanent house with water, sanitation, and electricity in a viable community with access to jobs, transport and essential community facilities. This means that most urban households will initially get access to a serviced site with a one- or two-room core house and toilet. Technical and financial supports are to be made available to help families build more complete houses over time.

To achieve even this level of housing, it was necessary to increase the housing subsidy levels that had been agreed to internally in the ANC, and externally between the Housing Forum and the previous government. The poorest 40 per cent of families with incomes below Cdn \$320 per month will be eligible for a subsidy of \$6000, up from the earlier agreed level of \$5000. This commits the government to an expenditure of an additional \$110 million a year.

Given the enormous housing backlog, the government intends to help build an extra 350,000 units per year within five years. By comparison to both the 25,000 or so low-income houses produced annually in the dying years of apartheid, and the track record of most Third World governments, this is a very impressive commitment. But even if this level is achieved and can be sustained, it will still take 10 to 15 years to deal with the housing backlog. To reach this target, the subsidy bill in the first year of the plan, and every year thereafter, will be about \$1.6 Billion or 3.5 per cent of the national budget.

To help sell such substantial state subsidies for housing, the White Paper starts by situating housing in the macro-economy. The Paper argues for the important role that housing can play in reviving the South African economy, relieving poverty and redistributing resources. It also suggests that providing housing requires a greater share of the national budget and will be sustainable in a context of economic growth and increasing employment. The Paper later confirms that the government's goal is as stated in the RDP - to increase housing's share of the state budget to five per cent within five years.

It is easy to believe that Slovo, always the strategist, deliberately used some of his considerable political capital to set this benchmark. It certainly will stand as an enduring challenge to fiscal conservatives in the ANC and the GNU who have suggested a much lower level of housing spending despite even the World Bank's endorsement of five per cent as appropriate. It also puts pressure on them to get the overall economy going or risk being blamed for the failure to sustain housing spending. While housing can contribute to internal industrialization and economic growth, it alone cannot lead the country out of its deep economic crisis.

Subsidies are only one of many crucial elements in the mix. The

policy also picks up on a lot of recent global thinking on shelter in the South. This is especially so in its emphasis on a multi-pronged housing strategy to create an enabling environment within which a partnership of various tiers of government, the private sector and communities can work together. Some aspects of this partnership may eventually prove to be more illusory than exuberant policy makers are anticipating. Space permits only a quick look at a few of these.

### End-user finance and the mortgage lenders

In the mid-1980s, the banks propped up apartheid township strategies by lending lots of money for black homeownership. This was intended to consolidate a more conservative and stabilizing group in black areas. Unfortunately, the banks lent recklessly for poorly built houses, often to people with precarious finances that were further undermined as the recession deepened. Many of the new homeowners then formed or joined civic organizations that initiated mortgage boycotts that needed repairs or prevent evictions of mortgage defaulters by the sheriffs. These were then linked to the more general boycotts of rents and service charges. Subsequently, the banks refused to lend in townships and other black areas, including Johannesburg's inner city.

In its efforts to entice the banks back into the low-income market, the government has bent over backwards to provide incentives including mortgage insurance and a commitment to assist with existing properties in default. In addition, high level government leaders, including Nelson Mandela and Tokyo Sexwale, have been heavily promoting an end to boycotts. The White Paper takes this to the point of threatening that communities will not get housing subsidies or access to loans if they do not pay rents and service charges.

While it may be fair to ask communities to behave responsibly,

when money and coordinated state action are offered up for priority reconstruction areas, to some this seems uncomfortably close to blaming the victims. It also may further divide communities by pitting homeowners against those who never have had a home, payers against non-payers, and so on. All this to persuade the mortgage lenders to lend to roughly the top third of the low-income group that needs housing. If the amount of time dedicated to cooking the deal with the formal financial institutions is any indication, promises to develop more sensitive approaches for the 70 per cent majority may continue to take a back seat.

### The private sector

The White Paper is much more emphatic in warning suppliers of housing materials and the construction industry that intervention will be undertaken if price inflation in these highly concentrated sectors is not controlled. This may be in response to already apparent price increases in projects starting up under interim subsidy programs.

While it remains to be seen what action government will take if the almost inevitable profiteering takes place, encouragement for home builder warranties and a consumer education program are welcome initiatives. The White Paper also promises some protection for tenants.

### Institutional reform

The White Paper continues the process of rationalizing the multiplicity of government housing departments and parastatals created to service different racial groups and homelands. It attempts to define appropriate roles for national, provincial and local levels of government, and new statutory advisory housing boards which will include community and private sector representatives. In so doing, it makes the case for a national housing subsidy standard even though housing is an area of overlapping national and provincial jurisdiction.

It will also be some time before democratically elected local governments are in place and develop the political will to promote low income housing projects on well located land. It will come as no surprise if bickering among the three levels of government becomes a permanent feature of the political landscape.

### Support for people's processes

The White Paper shares the widely held view that the key to building housing in Third World countries is to support peoples own processes. The White Paper suggests that local government and the private sector should provide technical, legal and financial advice and access to housing materials at affordable



Orange Farm Squatter camp, near Johannesburg 1994

prices. However, experience with sites and services schemes in South Africa might make anyone wary of trusting too much of this work to consultants or the construction industry. Local government capacities remain limited and many officials will need to be weaned away from past practices that encouraged corruption and poor quality, especially in black townships. A more worthwhile investment might be to support the building of responsible community and NGO capacity to advise, implement and monitor projects as is the case in many other countries.

While a lot of effort has gone into designing with the banks a savings/mortgage loan scheme for individuals, almost nothing has been done on collective schemes which have the potential for reaching a much larger group of people at lower costs. These are significant omissions because collective housing efforts can support and multiply individual energies while helping to build community in violence-ridden townships. Cooperatives and housing associations can also create

housing that will stay affordable in the long run, reducing the temptation for poor people to sell off their newly acquired subsidized house to slightly higher income people who may be further down on the long waiting lists for housing.

Perhaps it is the case, as was suggested several months ago by a recent high level appointee to the Housing Ministry, that the initial emphasis on getting the private sector going will give way to a more concerted effort to mobilize and prioritize community and NGO housing initiatives. If not, this may prove to be the program's political undoing. People kept at the level of beneficiaries waiting for government goodies delivered by the private sector are much more likely to become impatient with progress which will inevitably be slow in relation to the size of the housing problem. On the other hand, where communities are full participants, people will understand that there are constraints to immediate delivery and work together to incrementally solve their housing needs.

There are other very significant but underdeveloped parts of the housing strategy that cannot be explored here but deserve some note, especially policy commitments to gender equality in all aspects of housing, upgrading of public and private hostels, developing an appropriate rural housing strategy, and meeting the special needs of youth, elderly, and the disabled. Hopefully, recognition of housing as a basic human right in the policy document will eventually be followed by enshrining this and other second generation rights in the constitution.

Ultimately, the impacts of the housing white paper should become visible on the ground - one of the great satisfactions of work in this sector and something that Slovo would certainly have enjoyed. He also would not have expected everything to go smoothly and would have welcomed the debates, experiments, successes and failures that such a comprehensive policy initiative deserves. It is indeed a challenge worthy of its author.

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## II. Whose Health?

**BY YOGAN PILLAY**

*Yogan Pillay is chair of the Psychology Department at the University of Durban-Westville, and recently completed a Phd dissertation, "The Politics of Exclusion: Health Policy in South Africa, 1910-1990," at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health.*

As with any negotiated settlement, compromises were made to end apartheid. Some of these compromises are already proving to be barriers to the creation of an effective public health program which can rapidly meet the health care needs of the black working class. This is clear when we look at the formation of the Government of National Unity [GNU] itself, the guarantee of civil service jobs for the next five years and the granting of significant powers to provincial governments.

While the African National Congress recently shifted its health policy to one that reflects support for a 'mixed economy', key policy-makers, trade unions and community and women's movements remain committed to increasing the size of the public health sector in order to meet the basic health care needs of the majority of the population, regardless of ability to pay for such services. This progressive commitment is documented in the Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP] and the ANC's National Health Plan.

The RDP accepts that apartheid policies of the past have damaged the health of all South Africans and that health care services were fragmented, inadequate, ineffective, poorly distributed and inefficiently delivered. The extent of the problem

is illustrated by the fact that despite spending ten times what the World Bank estimates basic health care should cost, millions of people continue to have inadequate access to basic health care services. For every \$1 spent on blacks, \$4 is spent on whites.

The RDP argues for the establishment of a national health system (NHS) which incorporates both the public and private sectors and which dismantles the fragmented system in which there have been some 14 Departments of Health. The need to integrate the public and private health sectors is vital if the GNU is to achieve equity in the distribution of health care resources. Currently, health care services are inequitably distributed. The public health sector serves 80 percent of the population but consumes half the total



health budget. The remaining half is therefore spent on just 20 percent of the population. This is all the more untenable because the private sector provides largely curative rather than preventative care.

An additional problem is that the size of the private health sector is increasing at an alarming rate. This sector is currently serviced by 69 percent of the total number of registered physicians which represents a 111.8 percent increase when compared to figures for 1979. The situation with dentists is worse and the proportion of nurses employed in the private sector has also increased since 1979, though not to the same extent.

According to the RDP, "reconstruction in the health sector will involve the complete transformation of the entire delivery system." This will entail the review of all relevant

legislation, organizations and institutions and the development of "delivery systems and practices that are in line with international norms and standards; introduce management practices that promote efficient and compassionate delivery of services, and ensure respect for human rights and accountability to users, clients and the public at large."

The RDP also provides some hints as to how the health delivery system should be restructured. It argues for a strong primary health care system based on the district health model, provision of free public health care services for pregnant women and children under six years of age, comprehensive programs to tackle the large substance abuse problem, and health services for victims of violence.

These principles and programs have been adopted by the Depart-

ment of Health (DoH) which has appointed 13 task forces or 'Health Committees' to ensure the provision of good quality, affordable health care to all South Africans. The areas of focus of the health committees give some indication of the priorities of the new Department of Health. Of particular significance are the committees that have been established to investigate drug policy, nutrition, maternal and child health, health care finances, and the public and private sector interface. The inclusion of health care finance and the public and private mix are crucial to the reorganization of health services, to ensure that people who require care are able to obtain it, regardless of their ability to pay.

Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Department of Health's committees, the ANC's two partners in the GNU - the National Party and the Inkatha Free-

dom Party (IFP) – will argue that the market is the best mechanism to distribute health care resources. While the ANC historically supported a socialized national health service, the NP has a long history of promoting large scale privatization of health services. Indeed the NP was, together with the organized medical profession, largely responsible for destroying the community health centre movement of the 1940s which was to be the foundation of a primary health care system. As such, ANC leaders and policy makers will be hard-pressed to stop the growth of the private health care sector in the short term and to redirect some of its resources into the public health sector.

Such interventions will also be resisted by the organized medical profession, the pharmaceutical industry and big business. The South African Chamber of Business has already expressed its support for a three tiered health system in which the role of the Government is minimal and that of the market hegemonic.

Another potential barrier to successful health policy transformation are the provincial governments – especially those in which the ANC is not the majority party. More specifically, the decision to decentralize authority over health policy making may prove to be a mistake in IFP controlled KwaZulu-Natal and the National Party controlled Western Cape.

For example, the KwaZulu-Natal cabinet refused to comply with the national Minister of Health's mandate that each of the nine provinces appoint a Strategic Management Team [SMT] to oversee the process of transformation and the integration of the fourteen Health Departments that existed under apartheid – ostensibly, out of concern about what would happen, in the restructuring process, to the personnel of the former KwaZulu Department of Health. It was only after much persistence that the provincial minister

for health (an ANC member) managed to secure agreement from the KZN cabinet on the need for restructuring, albeit without a budget to finance the work of the SMT.

Meanwhile, back on the national level, the process of restructuring the Department of Health has been underway for the last eight months. While the DoH has publicized its successes, numerous criticisms have been levelled at the manner in which this has occurred. Among these criticisms are accusations of lack of transparency in the planning process, lack of adequate consultation with health activists and personnel on the ground, that the ANC's Health Plan which was developed with broad consultation is not being implemented, that outrageously large salaries are being paid to special advisors, that there is inadequate financial and economic planning, and that the planned clinics may not be operational given lack of provision of adequate recurrent financing.

This brings us to another serious barrier to change – civil servants who are loyal to the previous regime. While many civil servants are happy to serve the Government of the day, not all are. Those who are not have the potential to derail the transformation process and the efficient and effective delivery of health services. In addition, any attempt to appoint suitable personnel from outside the current cadre of civil servants will have the effect of bloating an already large bureaucracy as positions of current incumbents have been guaranteed.

Furthermore, the agreement to guarantee civil servants their jobs for the next five years makes it difficult to implement the Government's affirmative action program. The civil service has been the preserve of whites, especially Afrikaners, since the establishment of the modern South African state in 1910. It is going to be extremely expensive for the GNU to implement its labour policies without significantly

increasing costs to the Treasury. This constraint implies that, unless there is widespread resignation of top civil servants, it will take many years before the racial and ideological composition of this strata changes significantly and begins to reflect the demography of the country.

While these barriers to change are significant and should not be underestimated, opportunities for health policy reforms are being realized. The ANC has already signalled its commitment to meet the needs of the poor by making free health care services available to children under 6 years and pregnant mothers who do not have access to private health insurance. In addition, a primary school feeding programme has been established to provide young children from poor communities with a daily free hot meal.

Notwithstanding these gains for the working class and poor, other profound changes are urgently needed: (i) a major redistribution in the health care budget so that primary health care gets a significantly larger portion; (ii) cross subsidization between the private and public healthcare sectors; and (iii) the redistribution of health care resources like clinics, hospitals, nurses and physicians to rural areas, and to the previously designated black residential areas and former homelands.

While there are indications that the ANC and its allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the South African Communist Party and the South African National Civic Organization, are committed to meeting the basic health needs of the black working class, this sector of the populace must maintain pressure on the GNU. The struggle for power in South Africa did not end on April 27, 1994, and the GNU is susceptible to the demands of domestic and international capital. This makes the continued existence of a powerful working class lobby all the more vital.

# Savimbi . . . Again

BY VICTORIA BRITAIN

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

A new and more than ever surreal phase of the long struggle for power in Angola opened with the signing of the new peace accord in Lusaka on October 31, 1994. Jonas Savimbi, by deciding not to travel to Zambia but leaving the signature for Unita to be that of the little known Eugenio Manuvakula, gave the clearest of signs that the ceremony had more to do with saving face for those in the international community whose careers have been intertwined with the two years of the "peace process," than with a new commitment to peace and reconciliation on the part of Unita.

The Lusaka Accord gave Unita a share in power greater than it had won by the electoral process of September 1992: four full ministers and seven vice-ministers, ten provincial governors and deputies, six ambassadors, and a host of minor local administrative positions. This division of power, worked out by the mediators as early as March 1994 and accepted by the government within weeks (though not by Unita for months), contained considerable concessions by the government, most notably in the area of regional administration. In return, Unita was finally to give up the military option by integrating part of its forces (for the second time) into the national army and disbanding the rest. But the central political question, Savimbi's own future, was left not only unresolved in Lusaka, but actually undisputed (media speculation to the contrary notwithstanding) in two years of talks.

Immense confusion surrounded the much-postponed Lusaka signing and the ceasefire that was due to

come into force 48 hours later. No-one knew whether Savimbi's failure to appear meant he was ill, wounded, enraged by the last-minute loss of Huambo, had lost control of Unita himself, or was signalling his profound opposition to the accord. His account of being blocked in the Angolan bush by government military action was the one explanation which convinced no-one. Since the presumed assassination attack by his own men during the summer<sup>†</sup> he had spent more time in Morocco for medical treatment and Zaire for recuperation than in Angola.

But by mid-December Savimbi, breaking months of silence with an interview given to the French daily Liberation, cleared up much of the ambiguity. He declared that his army was, of course, the key to the situation. "Our soldiers must have part of the cake . . . for the moment they are not ready to go into this, not ready to accept cantonment." And he spelt out his own refusal to go to Luanda to meet President José Eduardo Dos Santos: "I'm not mad! Why would I go in order to be killed? As long as there is a plan to assassinate me I won't be part of all this. The government will really have to prove that they will keep their side of the bargain - just signing a paper is not enough." Savimbi's tone could hardly have been more belligerent, nor his rewriting of history more

<sup>†</sup> The facts are unclear, the main line of speculation being that this occurred in late July and was mounted by some of Savimbi's own military people who wanted to give up the war and take up a comfortable life in Luanda. Several of them apparently were executed in retribution.

flagrant. He claimed, for instance, that only half the MPLA troops, compared with 90% of Unita's, had been in cantonment areas in the transition to elections ("we will not make such a mistake again"), that there had been mass butchery of his cadres in late 1992, and that 8,000 South African mercenaries were currently fighting with the MPLA.

The interview, which journalist Stephen Smith claimed to have carried out in Bailundo, near Huambo, was illustrated with a new photograph of Savimbi, the first for many months, and his top advisers, dressed in casual non-military clothes. It was clearly calculated to dispel the prevalent notion that the Unita leadership was riven with dissension. Extreme scepticism greeted the claim that this reportage had been carried out in Bailundo. But, wherever it was done, it demonstrated that Savimbi's external backers were still prepared to organize an elaborate public relations coup for him to display his defiance of the latest of the series of peace agreements from Gbadolite in 1989 through Bicesse in 1991, Namibe in 1992, Addis Ababa and Abijan in 1993.

On the ground, Angolans made their own judgement about a peace accord which, in any other country, would not have been considered worthy of the name. More than one hundred government soldiers were killed in the first six weeks after the ceasefire was signed; fierce fighting continued around the diamond areas in Lunda; just before Christmas the capital was without electricity for several days after a major sabotage; Unita's radio, the Voice of the Black Cockerel, continued its poisonous ethnic propaganda



and Negage airport continued to be held by Unita. It was, as one Angolan put it, a ceasefire with permanent violations. The Lusaka accord's provision for a second round of presidential elections was just a pipe-dream, and the accommodating demeanour of the new Unita representative on the joint commission in Luanda, Isias Samakuva, was in total contradiction to either Savimbi's tone or the initially abrupt response of his top general, Ben Ben, to an invitation to meet with the government's General João Matos.

In this context the calls in late 1994 from Africa Watch for "an immediate international arms embargo applicable to both the Angolan government and Unita ... and the launching of a civilian-directed programme of human rights education throughout the country" appeared wide of the mark. Africa Watch, like many of the less experienced UN workers in Angola, approached the Angolan situation as though the two sides were more or less the same, ignoring the fundamental difference between a legitimate government trying to protect its citizens under attack, and a rebel movement trying to render the country ungovernable. (More experienced aid workers highlight the sharp contrast between Unita and the Eritreans during their long war: a movement which depended utterly on its external supports compared with one which was entirely self-sufficient.)

The latest Africa Watch report, which Alex Vines extracted in the most recent issue of SAR, contains much interesting first hand testimony, particularly from people who had spent long years in Unita areas, but its basic premise is wrong, as is much of the criticism of the government, notably for "intransigence" in UN mediation efforts, and for the purchase of weapons. The logic of the Africa Watch position is to reward Unita

for its gross violations of every accord and its attempt to wrest power by force from a situation where it could not win by the popular will.

No outsider can adequately convey the horror of what has happened in Angola. Like all evil it becomes banal once it goes on long enough and is accepted in general indifference. The rewriting of history implicit in the Africa Watch/UN presentation of the facts (and in Vines' article) compounds the horror by devaluing the heroism and stoicism of those who sacrificed so much for their vision of Angola's dignity. It is now twenty years since South Africa and the United States conspired with Zaire, Morocco and other African countries to use Jonas Savimbi to rob the country of its independence. No one then could have foreseen the ruthlessness with which the price of that policy would be exacted. The long undeclared post-independence war, then the years of negotiation and transition to elections, then the post-election war, have a unity. Together they have destroyed the country and its early hopes beyond repair. No one will ever know how many hundreds of thousands died in any phase of the war, but under the eyes of hundreds of international observers the new war launched by Savimbi in October 1992 killed well over 100,000 peo-

ple while the UN placated the Unita leader by meaningless negotiations designed as a fig leaf to cover his attempt to fight his way to power against a government which initially had virtually no army.

But something more fundamental has been eroded by these years of unequal struggle and deformed perceptions. Angola's long war against destabilisation, in harness with that of Frelimo and the ANC, gave to Southern Africa, to the whole continent, and to the Non-Aligned Movement, a focus of intellectual clarity for more than a decade. A socialist society in which education and health were the birthright of the poorest, and exploitation was to end, was the unquestioned goal of a just war. Imperialism was an easy concept to understand in the context of Angola's war. The fight against it, aided immeasurably by Cuban troops, was a fight in which ideological certainties played an important part. Those certainties vanished not only in the seismic world changes around 1989 in Europe, but in the erosion of the MPLA's ideals which began rather earlier under external pressure as the government struggled for the international recognition the US refused it. The character of the party changed with its class base, the leadership became increasingly distant from the base, and democracy died within the party. Economic pressure fed corruption. The church and the international community pressed for a reconciliation which denied Unita's history.

The last two years have made such reconciliation more difficult than ever as the suffering caused by Unita deepened. The economic crisis has seen galloping inflation destroy the value of wages, in the areas held by Unita little cultivation has taken place, and hundreds of thousands of displaced people have put their lives on hold. In sum, Savimbi's still uncertain future remains Angola's uncertain future.



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# Joe Slovo



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## Ode to a Mensch

**BY LINZI MANICOM**

*The following is based on the address given at the Memorial Service for Joe Slovo, in Toronto, January 15th 1995.*

Growing up as a nice-white-middle-class girl in South Africa in the 'Sixties, I got a full dose of the regime's panoramic, demonizing, anti-communist propaganda. There, in the Sunday papers, next to the techno-colour photos of fluffy-blond bikini girls, would be a muffled, murky shot of Joe Slovo, under such headlines as: Colonel in the KGB, Pre-eminent Public Enemy, Ruthless Revolutionary. Such epithets, heard through the filter of enhanced cold war sensibilities, cut this figure as even more malicious and menacing than our

own notorious BOSS (Bureau of State Security) agents.

Some years later, in London, I met the man and had to work to quell the sense of incongruity. For here was this benign, open-faced, affable figure, his soft voice cast in a thick Jo'burg accent. Just like any old "Joey" (as we called that city's residents). The only point of identification with things severe and Soviet that I could make out, were the distinctively Brezhnevian eyebrows.

In interviews in the very last stages of his life, Joe talked of feeling privileged to have participated actively in so many phases of the liberation struggle. I was privileged to have known Joe through just one of them. It was the period follow-

ing the Soweto Uprising, the late 'Seventies, and thousands of young South Africans had been forced into exile in several African countries. Joe, when passing through Dar es Salaam in his travels between Europe and the various ANC communities in Africa, would come and stay. He liked my cooking and there were long, late nights around the dinner table, talking, joking, debating, with bottles of Konyagi and Dodoma wine to take care of the tropical thirst.

There is often a quick and comfortable intimacy to friendships formed in exile (along with the sometimes fierce antagonisms). So much can be assumed to be held in common: there is of course the culture and memories, romanticised

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## remembering

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in even more vivid hues; the revolutionary project and the binding marginality it confers; a political discourse inflected with acronyms and Afrikaans slang-words that only the initiated can decipher; and a coterie of personalities to subject to affectionate gossip. With Joe the "feels-like-I've-known-you-for-years" phrase really applied. For he was an enormously congenial and open man, not one to allow differences in political opinion and affiliation to preempt personal connection.

Joe, at this time, was strongly advocating that exiled South Africans live and work in post-colonial Africa, in those countries that were struggling to put in place more democratic and redistributive programmes. Practical exposure to the realities of reconstruction would be invaluable preparation for a clear-eyed and grounded approach to South Africa's own post-apartheid phase. He was convinced that such experience would be drawn upon in his lifetime and mine, a prospect I couldn't always hold onto. He was particularly enthusiastic about FRELIMO's socialist project and he and Ruth First persuaded my partner and me to move down to Mozambique at the end of our sojourn in Tanzania, for an immersion course in quotidian post-Independence. A year later Ruth was blown apart by a parcel bomb and I joined the community of grievers that gathered around Joe and his daughters. Abdullah Ibrahim and Ekaya played at the memorial concert in Maputo, days after the tragedy, music that will forever evoke that shocked, shattering time and the sense of political regrouping and resuscitation that follows moments like those.

There will no doubt be formal biographies that extol Joe's extensive theoretical and practical contribution to South Africa's liberation. I await, with more interest, Joe's own account and analysis of the political times he lived and worked through. (While in Maputo, he was, with characteris-

tic enthusiasm and enjoyment, writing up his memoirs, intrigued and challenged by the task of recuperating, interpreting and imputing a narrative to passages of political history). Then there are the numerous other biographical moments, scattered through the memories of those of us who knew him and who bear the imprint of his political legacy in quite personalized and formative ways.

This was a time of intellectual ferment within the broad anti-apartheid movement, at home and abroad. Rigid and rusty theories of "the revolution" were being shaken up from two directions. Black Consciousness, initially regarded with some cynicism by the liberation movement's old guard as "petit-bourgeois" and "idealist," was clearly resonating deeply and powerfully with a whole generation of black South Africans. The young South African refugees in Tanzania and Angola were vibrant with ideas, vigorous in their analysis and freshly imbued with "struggle" experience. They pushed all of us who were outside of that political moment to take account of what today would be spoken about in terms of identity politics and racialized subjectivity.

Around the same time, taking root amongst university-based white intellectuals and also informing political work within a growing independent workers' movement was a non-Communist, "ultra-leftist" marxist analysis. Both these political discourses challenged the prevailing communist orthodoxy of the "two stage revolution" and "colonialism of a special type."

Unlike some of his fellow party members who were dismissive or actively hostile to these new political-theoretical currents (and to those espousing them), Joe engaged with them. He read the stuff, debated it, resisted it, and took some of it on board. This capacity for engagement, for rethinking, for reformulating ideas, for self-criticism, with-

out abandoning the framework of communism, is exemplified in his pamphlet "Has Socialism Failed?", which circulated in 1990. Many a discussion around these ideas took place on long, bright beaches and over empty dinner plates. In the course of them, I - young, idealistic, intellectual, experienced only in the realm of clean, prescriptive theory - was gently being educated about politics-for-real. For I was learning to see and heed the implications of Joe's keen sensitivity to, and respect for, African culture and nationalist aspirations, as well as the ways those configured the broader, composite (gendered, racialized, class) political culture in which we were immersed.

Joe's political pragmatism and honed strategical sense have been much commented on in recent years. What I had learnt from him in this regard mediated my reading of "Has Socialism Failed?" Let me explain. A tiny section of this document registered significantly for me as a feminist within the ANC. For in it, he criticizes the soviet model of political party organization, one which very much shaped the ANC, in which the women's organizations (like the trade unions and the youth organizations) are mere "support bases for the ongoing dictates of the state and party apparatus." The implicit argument here is for a relatively autonomous women's organization which is both led by, and reflects the interests of women, which exists, not merely to purvey the party line, but to address issues of gender oppression. Now, Joe was far from the initiator of this critique within the liberation movement. A sector of women within the Party, the ANC and other mass democratic organizations had been voicing it for some years, some of us getting our knuckles rapped for breaking ranks, in the process. And Joe, like other Movement leaders, had had to be pushed - by his family, by his women comrades, by the influence of international feminism - into acknowledging gender equality

as a political issue. But Joe, in lending his public and authoritative voice to that position gave it a weight and legitimacy that South African women were still, even then, having to fight very hard to achieve. Under the influence of Joe's "strategy-and-tactics" approach, I was able, instead of whining about the tardiness of his intervention on this issue and his not going far enough, to see his intervention as having helped to consolidate a credible space for the advancement of a more democratic and gender-aware politics.

How did Joe keep it up – given the long, slow and often bitterly painful historical moments he lived through, even though interspersed with times of progress and celebration? How did he retain his optimism, energy and capacity in ever changing, ever more challenging contexts? Much of his sustainability must be attributed to his capacity to jive, joke, and "jol" as we say in the vernacular.

Joe embodied – vividly – two characteristics that are definitive of the political culture of the South African liberation movement: partying and dancing, and a self-satirizing sense of humour. We didn't need an Emma Goldmann to lay down her criterion: "If I can't dance, I don't want your revolution." The two are coterminous for most South Africans. And the practice of transforming dire, tragic and ludicrous political circumstances into jokes that spread across the communities like flash fires is one that has probably sustained us all through moments that would be otherwise emotionally insupportable.

We have all seen Joe, in various television clips (like at the first SACP Congress on home territory since the 1990 unbanning) toy-toying away in the front lines – indefatigably, it seemed. Joe would also boogie along with the best of them at parties, with a idiosyncratic dip-'n'-flip of his shoulders. He was a fine "ballroom" dancer too. One of

my fondest memories pictures Joe at an ANC wedding in a Dar es Salaam suburban home. A couple of pigs from the ANC farm in Morogoro were "braai-ing" over a half oil drum, booze was flowing, township jive music was blaring. The main room was seething with sweaty, jubilant dancers who overflowed into the yard until early morning. Joe and I were grooving in the midst of all this when he suggested we foxtrot (I think that is what it is called). I didn't even bother to protest because I could see there was no way we were going anywhere in the packed, hopping room. I was wrong. Joe placed his hand firmly in the small of my back, seized my hand in his and with deftness, grace and determination proceeded to manoeuvre us – gliding, turning, smoothly – into the spaces he found and made. It struck me later that this was a metaphor for the way he operated politically. With great charm and skill he knew how to get where he wanted to go, taking others with him, without stepping too painfully on anyone's toes.

And then there was Joe, legendary teller of jokes. His repertoire consisted of long-winded, irreverent stories that deflated the sacred cows and satirized the foibles of the Soviet bloc and Stalinism, along with a collection of classical van der Merwe (the Newfies of South Africa) jokes. Even if I could remember more than the punchlines, I wouldn't here risk replicating a joke, for I don't want to violate my aural memories of the rich, Yiddish accent in which Joe recited these epic tales. Amongst friends and comrades, you would know who had recently been party to a Joe joke session for the catch phrases tended to find their way, as colloquialisms, into our everyday exchanges.

The one joke I can remember and will record – for it is pertinent – is a story that was always represented as being "true" as in, "it really happened." I think however it might well have achieved apocryphal

status through its many retellings in varying states of conviviality and inebriation. It concerns a meeting of Communist Party representatives from different countries where the "educational" item on the agenda was a discussion on Self-Criticism. The various participants were proclaiming the value of self-criticism as a strategy for learning from one's past mistakes, for correcting personal shortcomings, for improving organizational performance. Joe, fully supportive of Self-Criticism, made a spirited contribution. After the long and constructive discussion, when the comrades were gathered in the corridors for a break, Joe was approached by a comrade from a certain country (which here shall remain unspecified, me not wanting to perpetuate national/racial stereotypes). He congratulated Joe on his contribution to the debate but went on: "I think what you say about self-criticism, Comrade Joe, is all very well and good. But tell me how you solve this problem? We have found that some people, when you self-criticize them, are not happy. They don't like it."

A final vignette: I received the news of Joe's death when in the throes of an emotionally turbulent and draining set of struggles with my rebellious adolescent daughter. She, much to my frustration, has so far learnt only the first part of the tenet by which I have raised her: Question authority, not your mother! Joe was staying with me in Dar when my pregnancy with this same progeny was confirmed. My "partner-in-pregnancy" was in the States at the time so Joe got the full brunt of my exuberance, terror, preoccupation, awe, doubt, wonderment etc. He, veteran father of three daughters, his mind presumably on bigger issues, neither yawned, consoled nor emitted platitudes. Far from it. He was thrilled, celebratory, supportive and excited on my behalf. "Having and raising a child in the most extraordinarily rewarding, wonderful, challenging

experience. Nothing compares," I remember him saying, more than a few times over the course of his stay. Joe's death took me back to that time, those words, and imparted a wonderful sense of strength and perspective to carry me forward. Any project as important

as parenting or the struggle for social justice will go through its troughs and its trophies, its despair and victories. The important thing is to be reflective, to re-examine the context, to renew oneself, above all, to stay up-beat in meeting the challenges of changing conditions

and shifting exigencies. Joe's life was a testimony to this approach.

That such reflections, prompted by Joe's death, continue to generate such inspiration, is a tribute to the quality of the legacy he left us all. A mensch during his life, and beyond. Hambe kahle, Comrade Joe.

## Words and Deeds

BY JOHN S. SAUL

*The following text is based on remarks made by John S. Saul, a member of the SAR editorial collective, at the same memorial meeting for Joe Slovo in Toronto at which Linzi Manicom (above) also spoke.*

I mourn Joe Slovo as a friend and as a companion in political dialogue, dialogue that was, I'm sure, more important to me than it was to him - though he always took a serious interlocutor seriously and I learned a lot from him over the years.

I needn't repeat here the drama of Joe's rise from humble circumstance to major historical actor nor present a litany of his accomplishments - political, military, theoretical - in the service of South Africa's liberation. They have been well reported, and, in any case, the fact that today is officially declared a national day of mourning in the new South Africa speaks volumes in itself. Nor do you need me to tell you that the various testimonials echoing across South Africa and around the world are well merited.

His accomplishments will, in any case, be discussed for years to come - as will the more controversial aspects of his career and life-long political project. But knowing Joe I'm sure he would have valued a debate at his own memorial service even more than he would have valued a series of glowing testimonials!

Moreover, it was, as I've said, in the heat of a number of one-on-one political dialogues that I came to know him best. After all,



*Joe Slovo & Cyril Ramaphosa visit Kallehong after IFP attack, Jan. 1994  
(The photographer was killed moments after this was taken.)*

for long years he presented himself pretty much as a Stalinist of the old school, although never without a sense of humour on the subject: he had, for example, a whole raft of anti-Soviet jokes, each one more outlandish than the one before, that he would tell with relish and a real twinkle in his eye. We debated issues related to such general themes on a number of occasions. Indeed, he scanned my writings carefully - I was pleased to find - challenging, in particular, my various suggestions that a high cost was being paid for the fact that the grimly orthodox South African Communist Party had become the primary guardian

of socialism and of the left impulse within the ANC. He did admit to me once, more recently, that some of the vigour of his positive stance regarding things Soviet was tactical, framed by the reality that this was where the arms came from: certainly his approach was always eminently practical (though also capable of grounding, in the opinion of some of his critics within the movement, a certain political ruthlessness). There were also his widely-read reflections, from the 1980s, on the question "Has Socialism Failed?," reflections which contained a great deal of strong, if retrospective, criticism of the

Abdul Shariff - Impact Visuals

Soviet model. Nonetheless, his politics remained of a certain cast, and the precise mix of costs and benefits such politics produced in the context of the South African liberation struggle has only just begun to be assessed.

Was he, in any case, merely well on the road to reformism by the time he wrote his last, critical papers? This will be another controversial chapter for some future biographer, one that will interrogate Slovo's role both in the negotiations that, after 1990, led to the democratization of South Africa and in the new ANC-led government that came into power in 1994. That his role was important there can be no doubt, but on several recent visits to South Africa I was struck by how much that role had come to be debated amongst young cadres both within the SACP and without. As one observer wrote to me in the days after his death, "Whether prematurely jettisoning MK in August 1990 (without adequate consultation), or giving apartheid bureaucrats job security in October 1992 (which will doom the RDP), or agreeing to absolutely dreadful constitutional deals in the last months of 1993, or trying to denude the SACP of radical vision and energy (against the will of rank-and-file members), or, as Minister, fetishizing market-oriented solutions in the housing sphere, Slovo's weaknesses were serious."

Of course, others – and not merely editorialists in the establishment press who, somewhat paradoxically, had come to value his role, often in very outspoken terms – have been much more inclined to see Slovo as a voice of reason, a crucial actor in helping steer the ANC successfully through the treacherous waters of the transition. How to evaluate the art of the possible – and the plausible resonance of socialist goals – under South African circumstances? Answers to such tough questions will ultimately have

to frame our judgement of the course taken by Joe Slovo (and others) in the past few years. As it happens, he and I promised each other, in the press of the Carlton Hotel in the immediate aftermath of the election, that we would discuss just such questions when I returned to South Africa sometime this year. I can now only imagine the arguments he might have made – although debate the relevant issues with his own inimitable vigour, this he would surely have done.

And the fact remains: the bottom-line, even for those now rather more critical and questioning young cadres mentioned earlier, remained one of deep respect for all that Joe Slovo had accomplished, and for the depth of his commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. Perhaps I myself saw most clearly, at first hand, just what his clear-eyed, unwavering commitment could mean on the one occasion when, momentarily, I could be of some practical help to him, rather than merely an interlocutor in the realm of theoretical debate. In 1988 I had visited South Africa illegally and spent a month there; on my way back to Canada I stopped in Lusaka and met with Joe. This time our conversation was different. He wanted to know just what I had seen on the ground and what I thought about what I had seen. He interrogated me – there is no other word, for this time it was not word games we were playing – clearly and deeply, only pausing to comment when I summed up with the suggestion that things looked a little bleak, as, for the moment, seemed to be the case in South Africa. No, he said, a bit sternly, the pace is already picking up again. I thought of his celebrated joke: "Five years ago I said the South African revolution would be consummated in five years, and I see no reason to change my opinion." But of course, in 1988, he was right. We must thank the dialectic, or whatever other force is at work in history, that he lived, at least, to see

the day of victory that he, as much as anyone, had willed into being.

The cost was great, of course, though he bore it lightly, and bravely. I always marvelled at the casual, perhaps even foolhardy, manner in which he moved about, in Maputo, for example, when we both lived there. I would meet him on the street and he would offer me a lift. "My car's just over there," he would say. And there it would be, across the boulevard, under a tree and, as often as not, unlocked. He would merely jump in and start it up and I – did I have any choice? – would feel compelled to follow suit while trying to pretend to myself that it would never be wired with bombs!

Not that he escaped entirely unscathed. Many of his friends and comrades did die, not least his wife, my friend, Ruth First, killed, precisely, by a South African bomb. Ruth and Joe's was an intriguing, tempestuous relationship, frayed by somewhat divergent politics as Ruth moved away from the SACP fold to a more independent left position and by other tensions – but a remarkable relationship nonetheless. In fact, it was on the day of her death that I felt both closest to Joe and also closest to the spirit of sacrifice that made Joe's career, and indeed the whole anti-apartheid struggle, so heroic. I had been held up at the University, entangled, as other witnesses to the assassination were, in the police investigation, but when I finally arrived at Ruth and Joe's house he embraced me tightly. "John," he said in my ear, "They have taken away half of my life."

I rejoice that, nonetheless, he saw the new flag and the inauguration and the beginnings of a new South Africa. I mourn for his second wife, another friend from Maputo days, Helena, his three daughters, Gillian, Shawn and Robin and all South Africans and am grateful for the opportunity to honour Joe and mourn him with all those, South Africans and Canadians, who are here today.

# Civics in Zimbabwe: Are They Making a Difference?

BY RICHARD SAUNDERS

*Richard Saunders is SAR's man in Harare ... only he lives in Cape Town.*

The decisive political defeat of several authoritarian regimes in southern Africa in the 1990s has brought increased attention to the growing power and influence of civil society and with it, the emergence of new and revitalized forms of popular democracy in the region. In the wake of the ANC victory of 1994 and the ousting of corrupt and tired one-party state nationalist regimes in Zambia and Malawi, many have pointed to the pivotal role of community-based organizations in the protracted struggles that won or regained the most basic political democratic rights.

While the initial focal point for this interest in civil society was the South African "civics" movement that emerged in the 1980s, different flagship popular organizations in other countries - like the trade unions and human rights groups in Zambia and Malawi - also have been identified as pillars of new national social movements for democracy. Such organizations clearly played key roles in the fight to reopen the state to popular participation by challenging ruling parties and the state itself.

But what has been the situation regarding the role of civics where the state has been less rigidly autocratic and antagonistic to groups in civil society? More pointedly, what is the role of civics once democracy has been won, and the state stands as the leading popular-democratic institution? These are questions with which the powerful South African civics, along with other parallel organizations elsewhere in

the region, are just starting to come to grips.

For indications of the problems facing them on the road ahead such organizations might consider the case of Zimbabwe, where the post-independence experience of civic activism has been generally a sobering one. While civic movements in the region have struggled to win and redirect local unpopular states, Zimbabwe's community organizations increasingly have been battling to hold the ZANU(PF) government of Robert Mugabe - in power since independence in 1980 - to its initial commitments to a popular development programme.

This has been mainly a losing battle so far, particularly since the launching in 1990 of a devastating structural adjustment programme (ESAP) which has led to severe cutbacks in social programmes and deepening poverty. But increasing political and economic hardship, and the failure of new-cast nationalist politics to meet the needs of a complex civil society, is also providing a catalyst for a new cycle of popular activism at community level. What are the limits of this activism, and where will it lead? The coming year should provide some clues in this regard.

## **Elections ... and apathy**

In early 1995 Zimbabweans go to the polls in the fourth set of national elections since independence in 1980. Barring any surprise developments, President Robert Mugabe's ZANU will win an easy majority across most of the country. Despite occasional flurries of activity among several small opposition parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s, ZANU has not been threatened or

seriously challenged in the national political arena. Yet in this year's elections ZANU will likely prevail with less popular support than ever - in the wake of a deepening disaffection with old guard nationalist politics that was already evident in the 1990 elections.

For the fact is that, these days, apathy towards the national political process is the dominant mood among growing numbers of socially and economically disenfranchised Zimbabweans, particularly those who are young, relatively well-educated and unemployed. Years of political corruption and growing high-handedness and intimidation by the ruling party at all levels of the social structure have diminished the nationalists' popular credibility.

More recently, the government's vastly unpopular neo-liberal economic policies have further eroded ZANU's social and political authority. In the wake of ESAP the standard of living of millions of Zimbabweans has plummeted dramatically. Most negatively affected have been those in urban areas, where the cost of living has skyrocketed even as the job market has become ever more shaky. But peasants have also suffered, especially during and after the century's worst drought in 1992. When needed most by the poor and needy, access to faltering key social services like health and education has been undermined by government cutbacks and the introduction of user fees and other regressive austerity measures. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured into private sector capital development - with little to show for it so far except a quickly rising foreign debt load!



*Nyafaru cooperative, Zimbabwe 1985*

### Political options?

These increasingly bitter political and economic experiences of nationalist rule have left a large constituency alienated from, if not hostile to, the political status quo. Having been deserted by the same "people's" government which in the early 1980s laid the foundations for an impressive social welfare state, the people themselves have turned their backs on ZANU in droves. But the problem is: what is there to turn to?

At a time of worsening social and economic crisis for most Zimbabweans, "national politics" has of-

fered few options. In fact, ZANU stands virtually alone as the one political party with anything approaching a coherent - if unpopular - agenda. Opposition parties are typically very small, poorly organized, and built around leaders, not policies. The one exception in this regard, the Forum Party, has a sketchy agenda, defined mainly to the right of ZANU, and a small constituency rooted in intellectual and business circles. None of the opposition parties has been able to offer - or, indeed, made serious attempts to offer - a platform for focusing popular grievances, or encouraging the

mass participation of ordinary Zimbabweans in policy critique and development. So the unprecedented absenteeism that characterized the 1990 national vote, in which barely 50% turned up to cast ballots (as against more than 90% in 1980 and 1985), will likely grow worse this year.

Rather cynically, ZANU is relying as much on popular political inertia as on its all-too-familiar intimidation of any emergent, potentially significant, organized opposition to carry on. This strategy will likely succeed again this time around, even though open splits

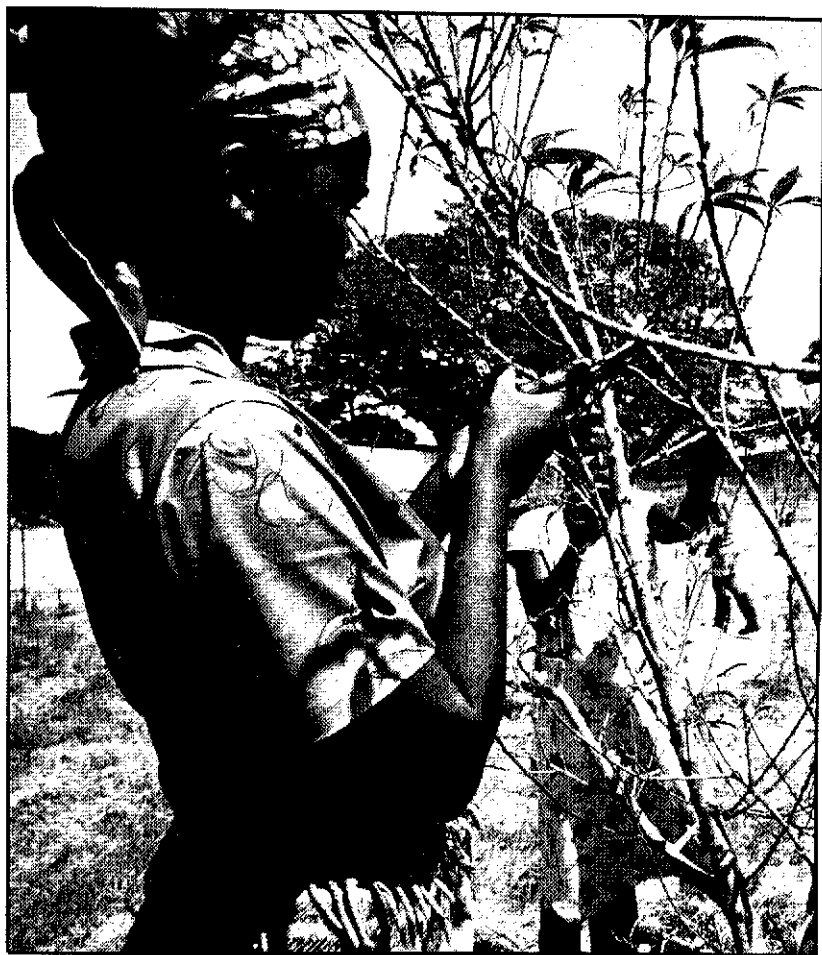


within and among regional branches of ZANU itself have also undermined the mobilizing capacity and unity of the ruling party. But the increasingly clear inadequacy of national politics and the disappointments spawned by ZANU's cynical manoeuvring have helped to revive and revitalize alternative forms of political activism and engagement, located outside the formal political arena of national party politics.

#### What about the civics?

In recent years Zimbabwe has seen the mushrooming of a range of civics as ordinary Zimbabweans have sought alternative channels of community and interest group representation, as well as new coping mechanisms in the wake of increasing economic adversity. ESAP's impact on ordinary Zimbabweans, combined with a certain liberalization conceded by ZANU in the political sphere and the emergence of a more active liberal-democratic constituency, have provided fertile terrain for the many new organizations that have sprouted in the 1990s.

The organizers of these civics are as diverse in character as the groups themselves. They include highly motivated individual activists with narrow specific interests, occupationally-defined organizations, and broadly-based community alliances representing a collection of local community leaders and a cross section of interest groups. They even include some progeny created by the state itself when, at times, it has called community organizations into existence by unilaterally carving out a space for them in national and local public structures. Together, these civics – trade unions, income generating groups, saving societies, residents associations, consumer and human rights groups and many other local, regional and national organizations – have opened important spaces for the channelling of political energies in new directions and, typically, away from the current dead-end of national politics.



*Tahni fruit growing cooperative, Zimbabwe 1985*

Bruce Paton - Impact Visuals

In one respect, it should be noted, this development represents a return to the colonial past for Zimbabwe's "civil society." For a large number of these new organizations are actually not "new" at all. Many are revived or revitalized versions of earlier organizations that have been dormant or impotent for most of the 1980s as ZANU – using organs of the party and state – sought to dominate the weakened civil society inherited from white Rhodesia. Thus, some of the more politically-focused civics – such as the residents associations which were called back into existence by popular demand in the early 1990s in many towns and cities – originally were forged by disenfranchised blacks as instruments of

nationalist struggle during colonial rule in the 1950s. In the 1990s township and city residents, once again sensing their practical disenfranchisement and lack of representation at the most basic level of local government, have merely re-formed a number of these organizations.

At the same time, various popular organizations constructed on the crest of the nationalist victory in the early 1980s also have revised their agendas in the wake of disillusionment with an increasingly antagonistic – if not openly hostile – government. Thus, by the 1990s, trade unions, co-operative unions and other popular initiatives formed in co-operation with or under the patronage of the ruling party, had

moved towards the adoption of more autonomous, community-responsive agendas.

In addition to these existing or rehabilitated organizations, political and market "liberalization" under ESAP has set the stage for a swell of new civics. Many of these groups, notably hundreds of savings clubs, burial societies and income generating collectives, were formed as rudimentary bulwarks against the deepening incursion of poverty (and again, signalled a return to tried and tested forms of community coping). In practice, many of these initiatives have very limited agendas, defined by the basic survival needs of the group. However, other bodies, such as human rights organizations, water development action committees and unemployment advocacy groups, have raised issues of accountability and popular participation in policy planning while mobilizing around narrower questions of economic policy and management. The community activism of these types of organizations, when taken together with that of other relatively active organizations like certain trade unions and local development agencies (e.g. Bulawayo-based ORAP), might be taken to indicate the growing strength and potential of a new-cast civic movement.

### The reality

Yet the reality since independence, and especially since 1990, is much bleaker than this impression implies. In fact, nearly all civics have faced – and continue to face – severe, often fundamentally disabling problems on a number of fronts. Thus, even the largest and best-organized organizations have struggled to meet their basic aims, in the face of internal weaknesses, considerable external limitations imposed by the state and ruling party, and poor interlinking with kindred groups and potential activist partners.

Zimbabwean civil society is littered with the wreckage of countless failed self-help organizations, train-

ing programmes, savings clubs and other schemes which never established a consistent regime of operation, nor attracted a regular membership. Amongst the primary factors accounting for this widespread breakdown are weak organizational skills and chronic lack of financing. Civics typically are dependent on volunteer labour and fund raising in the local community for sustenance. Given the inconsistency and low quality of the contributed skills involved, along with the abject poverty of many of the communities in which civics operate, most organizations are unstable from the outset.

There is, in consequence, a constant fight for basic organizational survival. Under these conditions there is little regular consultation and education of the membership, both of which are required if groups are to be democratic, inclusive and responsive to community needs. Even in better-financed and staffed organizations like the trade unions, the heavy pressures of operating with small budgets undercut the practical communication of ideas, grievances and aims to and amongst the grassroots, thereby severely qualifying the possibility of full-fledged participation from below.

### ZANU's response

Alongside these internal problems, however, are those stemming from ZANU's desire to maintain a leading presence in civil society. In the early years of independence ZANU, using organs of the party and state effectively, was the dominant social actor in much of civil society. Though the party's undisputed hegemony has long since vanished, ZANU has unceasingly battled to retain as much organizational control as possible over formally "non-political" social space. This approach has done much to thwart civics' non-partisan, community-based, active participation in national development.

Independent organizations of any stature are generally viewed with suspicion, particularly in recent

years as the economy has worsened and World Bank policies have undermined most people's standard of living. Civics' legitimate denials of involvement with opposition political parties have generally been ignored; for government, the potential of social coalescence around issues and institutions beyond the control of the ruling party justifies a narrow suspicion of and interest in civics' activities. And, as a direct result of this approach, the government has tried, variously, to block, frustrate, infiltrate, employ to advantage and otherwise neutralize many civics.

Faced with this situation, most organizations in a position to engage in advocacy (in fact, there are very few) shy away from confronting policy issues; and, certainly, from challenging the state or ZANU directly, even in benign ways like raising debates over policy aims and implementation. Many have found that limited and selective contact with the state and ruling party is the only way to achieve limited goals in the short term, even though this strategy clearly can mean the compromising of such organizations' broader aims in the longer run.

### A leading role?

In this context of weak internal organization and pressures from the state and dominant party, any talk of civics' leading role – or indeed, the emergence of a national civics "movement" as in South Africa – seems at very best premature.

Promising signs can be found: there is evidence that certain civics have indeed begun to offer a more direct voice for local community and group concerns than is available through existing ruling party and state structures. For example, locally-based residents associations, which act mainly as citizens advocacy and watchdog groups in some larger towns and cities, have become increasingly important at the level of municipal political activism in the face of ZANU's domination of city councils. In other cases – like the

## zimbabwe

trade unions, and organizations of the unemployed and veterans of the liberation war – civics have tried, albeit with limited success, to serve as nodes around which actors previously silenced by ZANU's domination of a weakened civil society could

begin to crystallize as more active political agents.

And yet, overall, enduring organizations with clear, committed and realistic agendas still do not feature among Zimbabwe's civics. Few groups operate practically at a na-

tional level, and many working for the same goals in different parts of the country are not aware of each other. When civics do co-operate (usually in a small municipal area or region), it is typically around very specific and narrowly-defined projects. Furthermore, there are no existing structures at the national or regional level designed to bring together and coordinate the activities of civics. Thus, while both ESAP and widespread dissatisfaction with the political status quo have provided plenty of raw material for mobilization and for the emergence of coalitions and joint agendas among a range of civics, little of this type of organizing has taken place.

Perhaps the most that can be said, then, is that Zimbabwean civil society is currently witnessing a slow recombination of its component elements, after years of domination by actors in the national political arena. This process is advancing with difficulty, and yet it is doing so at a steady pace. Importantly, its impetus is rooted in the local communities themselves; and this in itself is sufficient to distinguish the emerging civics as a popular, promising intervention from below. It also seems clear that the learning curve of mass-democratic participation is a gradual one, particularly in places where it is officially held already to exist, and where it has led to disillusionment and distrust of the "democratic" status quo.

But as new options and greater political openness unfold, and as the ruling party struggles to keep its house in order in the face of serious faction-fighting, the space and opportunities for civic activism will expand. Therefore, while there is no real civics movement in Zimbabwe just yet, in the longer term the continuing waves of local activism will surely contribute centrally to the development of a new democratic sensibility. In itself, this will be a victory of sorts. But it could also be a harbinger of better days to come for Zimbabwe.



Bruce Paton - Impact Visuals

*Simukai farming cooperative, Zimbabwe 1985*

# AIDS, Education, Theatre: A Zimbabwe Experience

BY DAVID POTTIE

*David Pottie is a member of the SAR editorial collective.*

In 1993, the World Health Organization estimated that eight million of the 13 million HIV positive adults world-wide are found in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Tisa Chifunyise, a Zimbabwean AIDS educator and the director of the Children's Media Trust in Harare, there are now 100,000 AIDS cases and one million HIV positive Zimbabweans. Out of a population of 11 million, one in ten are HIV positive. Young adults are most at risk and young women in particular.

While southern Africans are no strangers to enormous hardship, faced as they have been with war, famine, structural adjustment and trade liberalization, the human dimensions of AIDS across the continent threaten to raise these hardships to a new level. The size of the HIV positive population means that countries already squeezed by poverty now face further economic deprivation borne by higher health costs and the loss of productivity. AIDS in Africa is not only a health problem, it is a development problem.

Southern Africa Report recently had a chance to speak with Chifunyise when she was in Canada visiting other AIDS organizations on a tour coordinated by OXFAM-Canada. Through her work in community theatre and the Women and AIDS Support Network, Chifunyise has encountered many faces of the AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe. For Chifunyise, the AIDS explosion has its basis in several factors. The scale of the problem was underestimated in the past, and the popula-

tion was often not given the right figures. This initial state of denial was, she feels, a decision not to alarm the population. But the proportions of the crisis can no longer be ignored and AIDS workers now have to treat the health problems of a large HIV positive population even as they confront the sexual attitudes that perpetuate unsafe sex in the first place.



*Tisa Chifunyise*

But Chifunyise also cites the structural factors of poverty and male migrant labour for the spread of AIDS: thirty per cent of the workforce is HIV positive; the necessity to earn cash income coupled with the development of the sex trade in Zimbabwe has meant that AIDS in Zimbabwe, as in most of Africa, is not simply a "gay disease," it is a "family thing." Chifunyise had little to say about the gay population in Zimbabwe and her work does not

directly address the gay community; instead she spoke about divided families, declining health resources, and education about practising safe sex.

Each of these priorities is evident in Chifunyise's work with the Women and AIDS Support Network. The situation of rural women with AIDS is most severe and the rate of infection among rural mothers and their children is growing faster than in any other comparable population. According to Chifunyise, the rural cycle of AIDS transmission comes full circle when male migrant labourers return home from the cities, rural women are infected and pregnant women in turn infect their newborn. Rural women also face a host of other barriers to adequate care: the rural areas lack access to health clinics, women still retain prime care-giver responsibility, the value of women's work is consistently undervalued and most families are divided as men migrate to the urban areas for employment. Chifunyise finds that all too often rural women lack the economic infrastructure to support themselves without males. The Women and AIDS Support Network thus seeks to lend both material and moral support for women who have lost their jobs, been kicked out of their homes, or need child-minders.

To reach these women the Women and AIDS Support Network organizes at the community level through a variety of established women's organizations: churches, co-operatives, workplace associations and so on. For Chifunyise the community approach works because, "Women are much more organized in Zimbabwe than men, groups of

women are more accessible." They do try to reach men at the workplace, but she added wryly, "We have to try to reach them before they get drunk!"

Chifunyise also works with youth in the schools, dealing with groups of boys and girls at the same time. She adds that within some workshops, they might set aside separate time for boys and girls, but that as a group, youth lack the inhibitions of adults when discussing condom use. This is encouraging since the demographics of AIDS in Zimbabwe make success with youth imperative (25 per cent of recorded HIV positive cases are children under five). All the same, many parents often accuse AIDS education workers of encouraging young people to be promiscuous.

Chifunyise added that they still attempt to work closely with health personnel, because many clinics are in schools, but cutbacks in the health sector make this work more and more difficult.

#### Declining health resources

As one indication of the crisis in health care, between the financial years 1990/91 and 1992/93, real per capita expenditure on health in Zimbabwe fell by almost 30 percent. Chifunyise has noticed this erosion of national health service and the introduction of clinic fees: "Three years ago, you paid one dollar per visit at urban clinics, now you pay 15 dollars, so this has meant that fewer people can afford to go to clinics. The clinics used to have queues; now they don't have any queues." And with fewer resources at their disposal, the danger is that health officials will shift their attention from prevention (less expensive, but longer to produce results) to cure (more expensive, but easier to quantify).

Chifunyise offered a stark illustration of the net result of this cost-cutting: "A lot of people are being sent away from hospitals to go and

die at home because they want to use the facilities for those who can benefit from them." This route will only serve to exacerbate a worsening condition. Chifunyise admits, "I'm working in the field, I'm doing AIDS education and I don't know what drugs they are using. It seems that here [in Canada] everybody knows about AZT [one of a host of drugs used in AIDS treatment]. So there are not many of us who have access to those drugs."

Equally troublesome, although there has been blood screening for transfusions since 1985, there is an absence of widespread access to HIV testing. Says Chifunyise, "It's just not possible for me when I'm feeling healthy to go and say I want an HIV test. It's expensive and you are tested when there is a reason for it."

#### AIDS education

Against this backdrop, most of Chifunyise's energies are channelled into AIDS education and community

theatre to generate discussion about AIDS and safe sex. Given the severity of the AIDS epidemic in Africa, Chifunyise was overly modest about the nature of her work: "We do low profile work. It's not the kind of work that makes people raise their eyebrows." But Chifunyise was perhaps being too polite, because she later related that she still encounters many for whom there is still a tendency to protect the families by saying that someone died of TB or of pneumonia and not as a result of AIDS. Breaking such taboos through AIDS education is always the first priority for Chifunyise.

One measure of the enormous challenge in changing sexual attitudes centres around introducing condom use by husbands and wives: "That is something that we really have to discuss at every meeting that we organize, but condom use is involved in cultural attitudes. I mean, let's take an example of the woman whose husband works in town and he comes home every month or every six weeks or whenever he gets paid enough to bring supplies home. Women in Zimbabwe don't get married just to get married, they get married to have children and so at a lot of meetings we try to discuss the conditions for condom use. A lot of women will say, 'What impression will I give my husband if I suggest we use a condom? What am I saying: that I don't want to have your children, and what does that make me? Am I suggesting that you have been sleeping around or that I have been sleeping around with other men in the village?' So we suggest that they organize meetings with men when discussing their husbands. In terms of changing their behaviour it is a very difficult thing. Attitudes take a long time to change."

So changing men's sexual attitudes and privileges is not only about health, but opens up a complex range of social and political issues for Chifunyise and other AIDS

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education workers. Says Chifunyise, "The typical male view is that STDs are a 'women's disease' they are therefore a women's responsibility, and this attitude accounts for men who sent their wives away when they found out they were HIV positive; women lost their homes, their families." Chifunyise thinks this attitude is changing slowly, but it is still difficult to find men with a positive attitude towards the prevention, education and treatment of AIDS.

Chifunyise recognizes the danger that the very success in reaching women through AIDS education runs the risk of further reinforcing women's traditional roles as caregivers and nurturers. All the same, she maintains that it is the women who have been more willing to learn and to change their attitudes than the men. At one writer's workshop, some women recognized the nature of the problem, but stated that they have no choice as they are the ones

watching people die. Chifunyise added, "For them, it is difficult to see how it could be any different." Strong words then from someone who faces these issues everyday.

**Education and community theatre**

But Chifunyise not only encounters these attitudes, she sees them animated in the community theatre she coordinates. "We don't just perform a play. We help them find out who is in the community, what is their attitude to life, what do they think about themselves, about HIV. We try to find out who makes up the community and what information they have."

She has found that theatre is extremely successful at circumventing some of the resistant attitudes towards AIDS. "Then we use that information to create a play and in the process people explore their attitudes about AIDS."

Community theatre also brings Chifunyise to the streets and the gender divide typical of much daily life exposes itself. "We do a lot of our plays on the street and we use music and dance to get people's attention. At one of the plays there was a group of sex workers there and a group of young men. After performing the play the men were shouting across to the women, 'it's you women who are not careful enough', and the girls were shouting 'but its you who are leaving your wives at home and then coming to see us'. So that kind of exchange at the plays is very common."

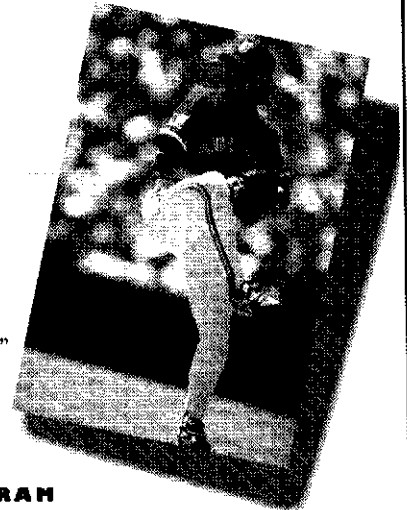
Zimbabwe needs more of this kind of exchange; Chifunyise knows this better than most. There is a growing awareness that AIDS is not only a health problem but also a crisis with its roots in the very structures of Zimbabwean social and economic life.

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# Bell Curve, South Africa Style: Rewriting the Civics Movement

BY MZWANELE MAYEKISO

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In the United States, where I am completing my master's degree in urban and community planning, there is a new intellectual fad on the far-right, which explains the poverty and despair of African-Americans in terms of genetically-determined ignorance. A variety of social ills – including having children out of wedlock – are blamed largely on the IQ of blacks, which is alleged to be fifteen points lower than that of whites. Following this logic, House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich and author Charles Murray want to end welfare benefits for teen mothers because they believe that the measly \$388 average monthly benefit acts as an incentive to have more children (they would also remove black children from unwed mothers and place them in government orphanages). Murray and Herrnstein's notorious "Bell Curve" is a farce of a book, for reasons that have been spelled out in great detail elsewhere. But I think North American solidarity activists – especially intellectuals – must be aware that blaming the victim is becoming fashionable in South Africa too, and that it may have important social consequences.

In this article – which is expanded upon in my forthcoming Monthly Review Press book "Civic Struggles for a New South Africa" – I review the methods and ideology of some leading outside researchers of the civic (township community group) movement. The reason to focus on this is that much

of the confusion that we face in the civic movement reflects our confusing times, and in particular the departure of many of our best comrades into government (for example, our first two presidents of the SA National Civic Organisation, Moses Mayekiso and Lechesa Tsenoli, have joined the ANC in parliament, which was a great loss of our movement's leadership). But this time of confusion will pass, and our grassroots forces are always regrouping, and always ready to campaign on pressing bread-and-butter issues. (At the recent ANC conference in Bloemfontein, it was remarked that civics have fared much better in keeping local structures intact than ANC branches.)

What is perhaps more dangerous to consider is the less-confused political move afoot by a group of corporate-oriented researchers who are extremely hostile to the civic movement. Their arguments blame South African township victims, in much the same way Gingrich, Murray and the Republican Party are doing to residents of US ghettos. The researchers develop theories about cultural conditions in traditionally-oppressed communities that distract attention from structural economic problems. They feed the bourgeois media with vague ideas which heighten middle-class journalists' intrinsic suspicion of black community power. All of this poisons debate even within the ANC-led Alliance, concerning issues such as continuing rent boycotts (for economic reasons), or internecine struggles within the progressive camp over the shape of local democracy in many locales, or the ability of civics to contribute to the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

A 'culture of poverty'?

But the research also has a larger purpose. As I have watched it develop over the last few years, it seems that the new social analysis is aimed at shoehorning the civic movement into thinking about the overall problems facing black society in South Africa in a way that lowers our expectations. This is known as the "culture of poverty" analysis, and has been applied by, among others, the leading white political theorist Lawrence Schlemmer of the Urban Foundation ("UF," now being merged into the Consultative Business Movement), researchers of Nedcor/Old Mutual (the largest financial institution in SA), and some conservative technocrats involved, unsuccessfully, in grassroots development.

The central issue is, as might be expected, one of class: those writers who suffer from what I call a "culture of privilege" appeared willing to do anything in their power – even floating reactionary and untenable ideas to the civic movement – to maintain their own wealth, assure the continuation of an extremely exploitative form of capitalism in South Africa, and lower the political willpower of the civic movement to gain our socio-economic objectives.

Schlemmer, whose work on townships stems from a biased reading of the US experience, admits in a 1992 UF paper that "until recently the idea of a culture of poverty was thought to be outdated. But it is now being revisited, especially since other ideas didn't adequately explain barriers to development within poor communities." Schlemmer believes that "People who are very poor also often have unrealistic ex-

pectations about the future. This is usually a way of escaping from reality." He goes on to distinguish "social action" (also called the politics of protest) from "community-based development" (politics of development). Schlemmer's analysis has already been attacked from the grassroots (in this case by a Civic Associations of Johannesburg comrade at a 1992 UF seminar):

*Lawrie spoke about the sense of futility and frustration that are supposed to result from social action and protest. I don't think this is really the case in South Africa. Many people feel that the changes of the past two years have come about because of these pressures. They feel they have achieved something through mass mobilisation.*

**What about a culture of corruption?**

Such criticism can be advanced even further, beyond what the civic movement has achieved in the past through a politics of protest. My point is that Schlemmer's distinction between social action and community-based development is a false dichotomy, because protest is inseparable from development. After all, the civic movement is - even after formal political liberation in 1994 - still dealing with intransigent (mainly white) bureaucrats steeped in the culture of privilege, many of whom have shown themselves to be

- *profoundly corrupt (the Department of Development Aid wasted hundreds of millions of rands, much of which was linked to fraudulent schemes of individual bureaucrats),*
- *linked to the security establishment (typical was the role of the Development Bank of Southern Africa in the reconstituted Joint Management Committee in Alexandra township which threatened activists' lives as late as 1990; later, agents from the National Intelligence System began monitoring "foreigners" in the civic movement in 1994, especially in central Johannesburg,*

*which was these deluded agents' self-proclaimed role in the Reconstruction and Development Programme),*

- *extremely supportive of the most undemocratic forces in SA (again, the Development Bank placed billions of rands in the hands of Black Local Authorities and homeland dictators),*
- *utterly incompetent in carrying out their own development policies (two examples include the Urban Foundation, whose development subsidiaries lost R11 million on a turnover of R17 million in 1991 in part due to ill-advised land speculation; and the Independent Development Trust and UF, which tried to pump billions into township credit and loan guarantee schemes and by all accounts failed miserably),*
- *niggardly and miserly in their visions of development (again, consider the undemocratic, non-participatory IDT/Urban Foundation "housing policy" which in reality was a site-and-service "toilet policy" offering R7,500 grants in a developer-driven process), and*
- *trickle-down, free-market oriented in their socio-economic philosophy.*

These are characteristics of the establishment development agencies which civic activists still confront daily. Even with the advent of democratic government, protest remains an essential part of the development process, in view of the uncooperative role of bureaucrats.

Protest, however, is unfashionable among liberal capitalists aiming for "social contracts." The most sophisticated intellectual approach to the civic movement (and the oppressed community in general) was that of Nedcor and Old Mutual, who mastered the art of the "compact."

#### Still blaming the poor

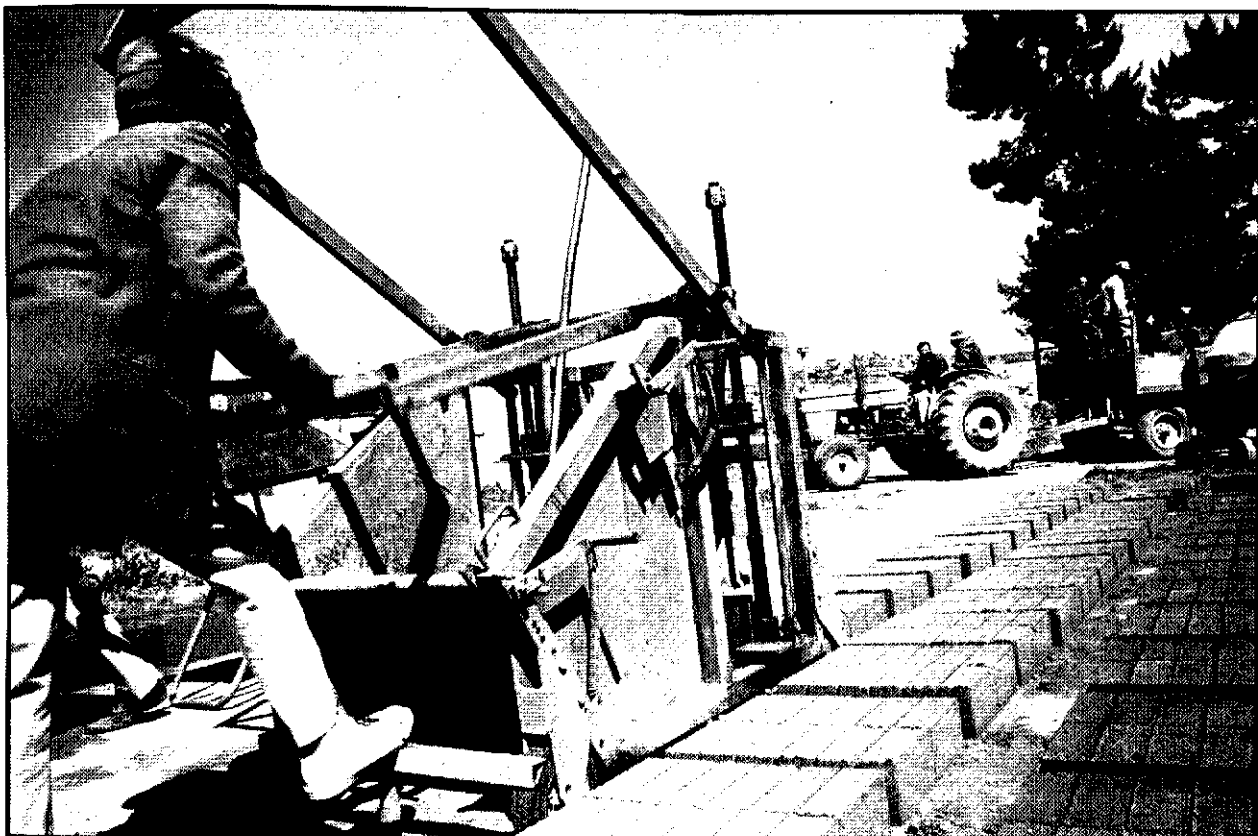
A fairly well-balanced group of researchers, led by the charismatic Bob Tucker (then Perm managing director), developed "Scenario Planning" as a means of probing future

"prospects for successful transition." The exercise was guided by Pierre Wack of Shell Oil. Among the researchers, Maude Motanyane, Mampela Ramphele and Sheila Sisulu supported the Scenario Planning exercise by "analyzing changes taking place in the black community." In doing so they considered the analysis generated by consultant Bruce Scott (a Harvard business professor) "a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of 'underclass' development in a process of desegregation." What did they learn?

Perhaps most importantly, they discovered an "underclass," a "community of the careless," a "dreadful society" in which "undesirable behavioral traits ... cease to be viewed as 'deviant' and instead become the norm." They dwelled upon the often-cited problem of the "culture of boycott" which allegedly emerged in politicized townships. They observed that mistrust, suspicion and economic deprivation remain entrenched in townships. And they concluded that this so-called "collective victimisation" was leading to "dependency" and a "culture of entitlement," and, moreover, that this "culture" was inimicable to democracy in the new South Africa: *Inferiority complex formation results from constant degradation. This leads to mediocrity, aggressive denial, and intolerance of criticism. In the late 1960s, the Black Consciousness Movement recognized the formation of an inferiority complex among blacks as one of the greatest constraints to their becoming active agents of history. The sense of victimization and its use to justify a lack of self-accountability and a culture of entitlement pose serious problems for the future. It may become difficult to wean people from the negative attitudes and behaviour patterns flowing from such a culture.*

The argument carries fundamental flaws. To compare black political thought in the 1960s with conditions forged by progressive organis-





Roger Bosch - Impact Visuals

*Community brick making development in Lielie-Fontein 1993*

ing and demands of the 1980s and 1990s is silly. Township organising in the 1980s did not make even a bit-part appearance in the Nedcor/Old Mutual analysis of black "survival strategies," unfortunately, nor for that matter was it included anywhere in the Scenario Planning exercise. Except: "The power struggle conducted between the government and its security forces on the one hand and the black community on the other during the 1970s and 1980s eroded the relationships, institutions, standards, and discipline on which any successful community depends." The opposite is truer: struggle strengthened not only our survival strategies but also our vision of a future society free of apartheid and socio-economic despair.

**Restore perspective on civics**

No doubt, township activists were out to destroy the apartheid sys-

tem, and went to great lengths to do so, many thousands losing their lives, but not because of an "inferiority complex." It was because they felt legitimately entitled to a democratic political system, and in particular political empowerment of the oppressed, redistribution of South Africa's wealth and restructuring of the economy in the interests of poor and working people.

Nedcor and Old Mutual are, it seems, satisfied with a democratic political system only if it specifically does not lead to political empowerment of the oppressed, redistribution of wealth and restructuring of the economy in the interests of poor and working people - this led their analysts to construct a method for dealing with political demands which treats them as cultural weaknesses.

In contrast, the civic movement

argument is that a democratic government must be responsible for subsidising the living standards of people so that they have at least the basic needs goods that are essential for a decent life: housing, education and child care, health-care, basic household goods, electrification, clean water, sewage services, essential clothing, etc. This is a well-developed notion in many advanced capitalist societies (and practised in Scandinavia without too many inferiority complexes forming).

What is crucial is that demands for these entitlements - and the political movement to support the demand - emerged not from weak township consciousness and organisation, but rather, in the mid 1950s (when the Freedom Charter was drawn up) from very militant anti-apartheid forces, and from even stronger township civic forces in the 1980s.

So no one should be surprised when Nedcor/Old Mutual and their hired hands characterise those of us demanding minimal decent standards of living as having inferiority complexes and a sense of victimisation, as highly dependent, and as unable to develop a culture of democracy.

### More mistaken arguments

Finally, consider the use of "culture of poverty" analysis as a means of explaining why establishment development plans go sour and establishment agency philosophies are rejected. Many development plans went sour in the interregnum, and are still not working out even under the rubric of the RDP. Someone had to be blamed, and when establishment agencies could not legitimately blame the community itself (for this would make it difficult to rationalise continuing with development work at all), those such as the Independent Development Trust and Urban Foundation easily cast blame upon the civics. For example, Shalto Cross, coordinator of rural development for the IDT, set out this argument in a 1992 African Studies Seminar Paper at Oxford University:

*The language of development, and much of the limelight, is currently dominated by civic and service organisations which are in the process of transforming themselves from organisations of struggle, into vehicles for the delivery of development. This is a rich area for study, and the wide bounds between the most ruthlessly tribunic and cynically populist of these, and those with less selfish and more genuine commitments to the arduous process of social reconstruction and self-reliance, will provide a broad field for the next generation of social historians.*

Who are the ruthless and cynical? Cross believes

*the most obvious proponents and standard bearers of civil society, namely many of the civic and service organisations which now offer*

*their services as development intermediaries, acting on behalf of the rural poor, may provide more an obstacle than a help. This essentially arises precisely because of their predominant concern with the political, which ... leads directly to an understatement and misinterpretation of those more hidden forms of social organisation, as represented by social and religious movements, which can most ably perform these functions.*

The "culture of poverty" ideology is important to his explanation. Cross approvingly cites Adam Ferguson's 1767 Essay on the History of Civil Society: "The great object

of policy ... is to secure to the family its means of subsistence and settlement; to protect the industrious in the pursuit of his occupation; to reconcile the restrictions of police, and the social affection of mankind, with their separate and interested pursuit."

### They keep piling it on

Now it all becomes clear: Cross seeks not a vibrant civil society able to defend poor and working-class people's interests through ongoing struggle, but rather an explicitly civilised society with "a common sense of nationality, and internalised



*Squatter camp in Soweto township 1994*

sense of civic order ...” such as new religious movements, all within the broader “developmental” context, of course, of “a shift towards manufacturing industry combined with a breakthrough into major new export markets.”

A similar position with respect to the supposed gatekeeper role of civics and service organisations was adopted by Bruce Boaden and Rob Taylor of the Urban Foundation. Boaden and Taylor denigrate the Community Committee (an allegedly “elite group”) of St. Wendolin’s, between Pinetown and Durban:

*The manipulation of the community by its leadership became problematic, as evidenced by the inability of those most in need of housing to gain access to even the most rudimentary of formal houses. Acquisition of sites on a site-and-service basis for the erection of informal housing was discredited by the leadership. The presence of a development agency made it possible to gain credibility for the leadership in terms of attracting resources. The fact that those resources were not used appropriately was not considered to be the fault of the leadership.*

We are asked to believe, from the representatives of big capital, that a large community is “manipulated” by its civic (one well-structured with eight functioning area committees and countless street committees) and by (democratically-elected) civic leadership, who in turn are misled by the development agency, a university-based service organisation. (In reality, the organisation, Built Environment Support Group, has a well-respected working methodology characterised by community capacity-building.) Boaden and Taylor complain that St. Wendolin’s was “over-serviced and over-surveyed” by this “interventionist agency” with its “own agenda.”

In reality, the civic leadership’s opinion was that the UF was aiming to build middle-class housing. This opinion was based on extensive

experience with the UF throughout the Durban area. (My source is civic leader Musa Soni, whom I worked with in Johannesburg at Planact.)

Boaden and Taylor did not reveal in their article that the UF attempted, unsuccessfully, to acquire St. Wendolin’s land from the Catholic Church, which formally owned it on behalf of the community. Nor did they reveal that there was no UF consultation on the housing process. The site-and-service scheme was rejected because the plan did not fulfil community expectations of decent standards. (This was in 1988, and it is no surprise that after hundreds of efforts by establishment agencies to make the horrid site-and-service philosophy work, in July 1992 the SA National Civic Organisation adopted an official policy position calling for a moratorium on IDT and UF site-and-service schemes.) Community members were so opposed to the UF that they occupied the St. Wendolin’s Development Centre (a UF Informal Settlement Division workshop), leading to the centre’s shutdown.

Rather than admit their own failings, Boaden and Turner explain – inconsistent with “culture of poverty” analysis – that St. Wendolin’s was the victim of “a sense of helplessness born of years of dependency fostered by the political system,” complicated by “a dependence on the church as the purveyor of goods and services” which “created an atmosphere of expectation in relation to the further development of the area,” such as “the expectation of subsidy which would deliver large numbers of sites and formal houses at virtually no cost to the end-user.”

While it is interesting to note the difference between these authors and Cross in terms of their respect for religion, the community itself disproved the Boaden and Taylor “helplessness theory” by constructing their own school at St. Wendolin’s. So while “culture of poverty” analysis may ap-

pear tempting as a means of shifting blame for development gone sour, in this case the analysts protest a bit too vigorously – apparently because the community was not dependent enough ... on the UF.

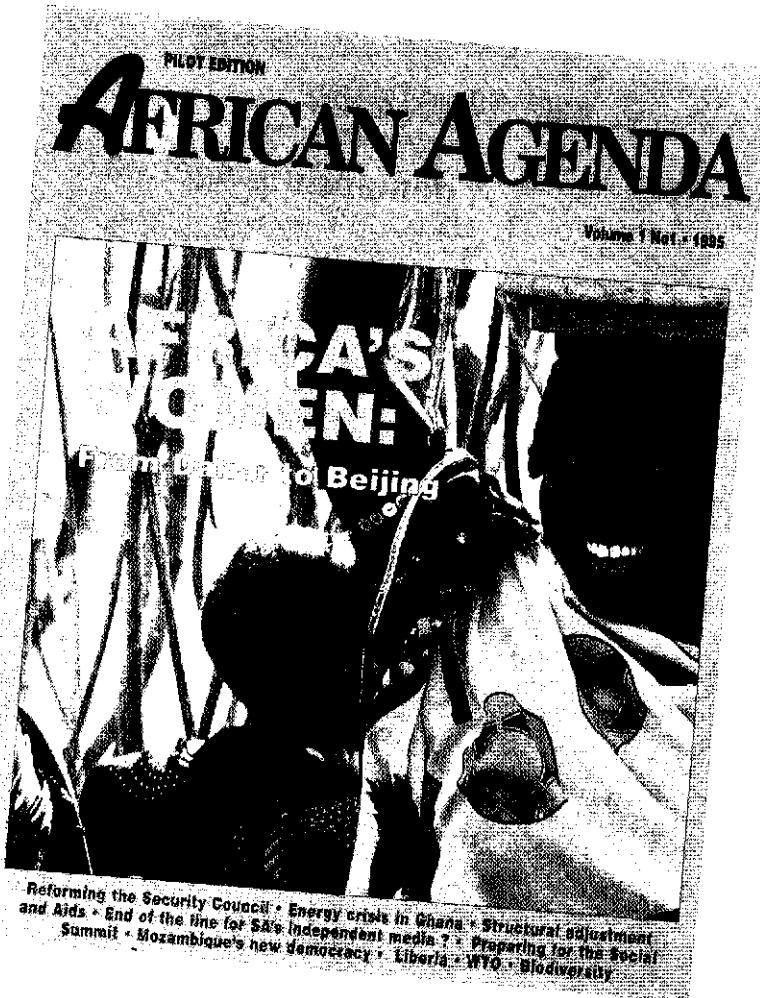
### Ideas do matter

I have focused in this article on ideology, because it seems sometimes as if it is becoming something of a material force in undermining the civic agenda, and with it, true socio-economic liberation in South Africa. I have often defended our own civic ideology of “ungovernability” as being important to the way we have waged our anti-apartheid struggle. We always took a page from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, who said

*The analysis of these propositions tends, I think, to reinforce the conception of “historical bloc” in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely indicative value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces.*

For solidarity activists and readers of Southern Africa Report, many of whom also are involved in defending gains made in civil rights and national struggles in the West, what we are seeing is an extension of the problems of corporate globalization – the material forces – which I described in my last article (SAR, December 1994). The ideological form is clearly a global phenomenon (as reflected in the intensified attack on people of colour and the poor in the United States), and is aimed at weakening our instinct for liberation and for social justice. It is the intellectual icing on the neo-liberal cake, which encourages the bourgeoisie to become fat and sassy, with fewer and fewer crumbs for the rest of us. It is incumbent upon all of us to fight such reactionary analysis, from wherever it emanates.

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